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GOTTHOLD'S EMBLEMS.

GOTTHOLD'S EMBLEMS:
 OR
 INVISIBLE THINGS UNDERSTOOD
 BY
 THINGS THAT ARE MADE.

BY CHRISTIAN SCRIVER,
MINISTER OF MAGDEBURG IN 1671.

TRANSLATED FROM THE TWENTY-EIGHTH GERMAN EDITION
 BY
 THE REV. ROBERT MENZIES,
 HODDAM.

" Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
 Sermons in stones, and GOD in everything."

EDINBURGH:
 T. & T. CLARK, 38, GEORGE STREET.
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE work, which is here presented to the English reader, belongs to a class of which the importation from Germany into this country has been comparatively small. We have received large supplies of her scientific theology, in the shape of expositions of Scripture and histories of the Church and its doctrine. We have also received a few admirable specimens of her practical divinity, such as the Sermons of Krummacher. But, with her strictly devotional literature, we are, as yet, with the solitary though noble exception of Bogatzky's "Golden Treasury," almost entirely unacquainted. This, however, is just the field in which the deep sentiment which forms the prominent feature in the character of the nation, and lends so powerful a charm to their poetry and music, seems peculiarly to fit the Germans to excel,—nay, it is the field in which they have in fact excelled. Their literature is rich in works addressed

to the religious affections, and designed to feed the lamp of faith and fan the flame of devotion in the heart, and which occupy, in their pious families, the place occupied in our own by the "Saint's Everlasting Rest," Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," Flavel's "Token for Mourners," and Hervey's "Meditations." For instance, Dr Tholuck's *Stunden der Andacht* stands pre-eminent among all modern productions of this class. It is a work without a rival in any language, and loudly calls for some skilful pen to transplant it worthily into our own. And here is another, nearly two centuries old, but still instinct with the vigour and freshness of youth, which reappears, like the spirit of a departed saint, and claims audience, while, in accents strangely sweet and solemn, it discourses to us of eternal things.

To satisfy the natural curiosity of the reader, the following particulars respecting the author and his work, are premised. They are borrowed from the twenty-eighth edition of it, which was published at Barmen in 1846, and is the one from which the present translation has been made.

Christian Sriver was born on the 2d January 1629 at Rendsburg, studied at Rostock, was ap-

pointed deacon at Stendal in 1653, pastor of the Church of St James' at Magdeburg in 1667, and court preacher and consistorial councillor at Quedlinburg, in 1690, where, on the 5th of April 1693, he departed this life.

The honours and applause paid by his contemporaries to this richly gifted minister of the pure word of God, are almost without a parallel. Not only was he so precious and dear to his congregation at Magdeburg, that, according to his own public testimony at parting from them, they would, if possible, have "*plucked out and given him their eyes;*" but he inspired the warmest affection in Christian brethren, in quarters far beyond the narrow limits of his personal labours, and frequently received from them addresses full of acknowledgment and gratitude. The Queen of Sweden (at that time the first and most powerful Protestant kingdom in the world), invited him to be her spiritual guide and court preacher at Stockholm, and wept and was inconsolable, when, feeling the infirmities of age, and, prompted by modesty and attachment to his flock and sorely afflicted fatherland, he declined the honourable call. The most eminent theologians of the day also looked up to him with boundless esteem,

and humbly yielded the palm to one who was himself the humblest of them all. The celebrated Spener often extolled Scriver, and says, "In him I am sensible of a much richer measure of grace than has been allotted to myself." In one passage, he longs for the opportunity of once more, in this present life, seeing and conversing with that chosen friend of God, *as a mercy for which he would require specially to thank the Lord.* Dr Pritius, J. F. Buddeus, and Chr. Eb. Weismann, in writings that survive, are, in like manner, full of his praise. The last designates him "*as an excellent instrument of God, a man of genuine piety, holy eloquence, spiritual discernment, and fascinating power.*" Scriver's numerous writings were read, applauded, and almost devoured, wherever the German language was known and the evangelical church possessed living members; and the principal of them passed through numerous editions, even after the author's death.

That Scriver was afterwards, for a long time, almost forgotten, arose, no doubt, partly from the ascendancy gained, in many ways, by infidelity, and partly also from the gradual progress made, and the changes undergone, by the German language, while no one appeared capable of judiciously applying a helping-

hand, in this respect, to the works of our author, whose language, notwithstanding, may, to this day, be, in numberless passages, designated *truly classical*.

It appears as if he had had a presentiment of the fate of his books, when, in his meditation on the "Clout," he says: "*All things shall be alike to me, be they lofty, or be they low; favour and affliction, honour and disgrace; whichever accords with Thy most sweet and holy pleasure. Come on, world; toss me to and fro, up and down, on the bench or under it, into the light or into the dark corner. To me it is the same; toss me where Thou wilt, there shall my God find me, and thence will He one day draw me forth.*" This is exactly what he has experienced in his writings. He was tossed to and fro, up and down, under the bench, and into the dark corner, but God has again brought him forth into the light.

His works had entirely disappeared out of the booksellers' shops, when some stray copies of them, almost entirely decayed, and secretly valued by their owners, as the legacy of pious ancestors,¹ but gene-

¹ The Editor of the Twenty-third Edition of *Gotthold's Emblems* states, as one of his difficulties, the impossibility of procuring a copy of the work, as the parties who possessed it refused to part with it for any price.

rally despised, ridiculed, and rejected, fell into the hands of some Christian and judicious men, who were not deterred from reading and examining them, either by the dust, which time had accumulated on their boards, or yet by the partially antiquated language of the contents. They instantly felt that the Spirit of God and of genuine Christianity, breathed out of the sallow pages,—and began to vie with each other, and with his admirers of a bygone age, in praising and applauding the author. “Sriver,” says one of them, “is *luminous* as the Alpine peaks, when the sun rises in his grandeur; *sharp* as the sword of Gideon, *sweet* as honey and the honey-comb, *gentle* as vernal dew in the glimmer of the moon, *fruitful* as a garden which God has blessed, and *Christian* as an apostle.”—“Confessions of Faith,” as another testifies, “can hinder no one from drawing from this fountain; for Sriver was a Christian, and lived upon the heights of Christianity—high above the strifes of pride.” To collect all that has been said or written in his praise, would fill a volume. We cannot, however, refrain from quoting a few detached sentences from the most recent biography of Sriver, by Pastor Brauns, written generally in a strain of

almost hymnal panegeric.—“Scriver,” it is said, “had *no equal* in his day. In the spacious halls of Scripture, he wanders up and down, more at home than in his own house. He plays on its thousand strings, like David on his harp, without one false note. He is never *beneath* and never *above*, but always at the vital centre of the word. From that the stream of his discourse flows forth, clear as the crystal spring of Siloa, and strong as the flood of Jordan, descending from Lebanon through the flowery borders of the Holy Land. His preaching is a tempest in the sky, a gentle May-shower dropping through the sunshine upon the parched land, gleams of lightning, that terrify the night; peals of thunder making the earth tremble under the foot of the traveller. But come and see. Do more; read the works of this old Psalmist.”—“As the fruit of his unparalleled familiarity with Scripture, and a faith in it so firm, that, far from excluding any essential part, he will not so much as pass a letter with indifference, Scriver evinces a profound piety, conscious at every moment, and in every place, of being encompassed, upheld, and cherished by God, and which visibly sees, and palpably feels, His universal agency. In short, a consciousness of the Deity is as much his

vital element, as water is to the fish. A bird in the air, a flower by the wayside, every thorn bush he meets, arrests him ; he cannot choose, but stop and contemplate, adore and exult."—"Scriver is always *before* God, *in* God, and *with* God. God is present to him in nature, in history, in every occurrence, however trivial and unimportant. The Divine Being, Will, Decrees, and Grace, it is the equally delightful and imperative task of his life to discover in all that is or happens, to proclaim with gratitude and praise, and emphatically to recommend for the elevation of the heart."—"As he gazes, listens, and sinks his affections into the infinity of the Divine love, Scriver is sometimes, as it were, transported out of himself. Intoxicated with the vision of God, his whole being dissolves into love, gratitude, and praise."—"His life was a life in God. As he could not but eat and drink, so he could not but pray. To omit this duty, or regard it as useless, is to him an abhorrence and abomination. A holy anger seizes him when his eye alights upon the atheists of his day."—"If any clergyman needs a spiritual guide, let him choose Scriver. He is the preacher for preachers, full of consolation and encouragement to the well-meaning, but a storm of hail to the faithless and slothful pastor."

The emblems (or according to their original title, "Incidental Devotions") *form a costly set of pure and genuine diamonds, three hundred and sixty-six in number (in the original, four hundred), and each of them reflecting heaven. It is a book for all men, from the beggar on his pallet of straw, to the prince upon his throne.* (Pastor Wimmer.) "*With a strangely child-like eye, and charming lips, Scriver leads us forth into nature, as into a vault of mirrors, from which the image of God everywhere shines forth.*" (The Berlin Literarische Zeitung of Dec. 27, 1843.) "In these meditations Scriver displays a talent for discovering in the leaf of the tree, and in the flower by the wayside, the greatness, glory, and infinitude of the Divine love, and introduces nature, on every occasion, as an ambassadress sent by God for our instruction, consolation, and warning: *And this he does with an artlessness and simplicity, of which we shall hardly find a parallel in the whole circle of our books of devotion.*" (Pastor Brauns.) While we have excluded a number of pieces and paragraphs which seemed of less general interest, and, in others, have, with a cautious hand, smoothed the asperities of language, we have also adopted an arrangement, by means of which this book, which unquestionably possesses much of

the "savour of Life," much of the power of the Holy Ghost," much of the "honey of the Divine goodness," much "balm for wounds," and also very much poetical beauty; may likewise be conveniently used as a so-called Treasury for every day in the year, and the meditation, whose emblem belongs to any particular season, may be sought for in its proper place. This arrangement has been approved in former editions of the work, and we trust will not here be regarded as an improper innovation. In our opinion, it is perfectly consistent with the pious respect due to the old and venerable author.

The Translator has only to add, that the rest of the Meditations will be forthcoming, in due time, if there shall appear to be any wish, on the part of the public, to receive them.

DEDICATION.

MY God ! from this time at which he now completes his work, and gives it to the light, it is just a year since Thy servant was at the point of death, and in the eyes of many was even already dead. I had brought the "Incidental Devotions" down as far as "The Rod," when it pleased Thee to judge me worthy of experiencing the truth of what I had written concerning it. My strength departed, my countenance became wan and emaciated, my tongue cleaved for weakness to the roof of my mouth, and could scarcely tell the physicians how sorely parched my body was with fever. My nails were white. Faint and scarcely audible was the beating of my heart. I had bid farewell to my dear friends, and with joyful longing (as Thou knowest), counted the

hours, after the lapse of which, I hoped to be with Thee, and to enjoy Thine ineffable glory. There were believing souls, however, who, with a thousand tears and sighs, lay prostrate at Thy feet, and implored of Thee to spare my life. And so it seemed good to Thy mercy to add to the number of my years. Thou didst strengthen and raise me up. I was made a miracle and monument of Thine Almighty power and goodness. Thou hast showed to myself and others, that our God is the God of salvation, and that with God the Lord belong the issues from death. What else, then, can I do, but thank Thee for Thy faithfulness! My lips and my soul, which Thou hast redeemed, shall rejoice in Thee, and sing Thy praise; and to Thee this life, mercifully granted a second time, shall be henceforth consecrated.

It is true, O my Father, that a worse thing afterwards befel me. One cross was made to succeed another. Thou tookest away *the delight of mine eyes*—I could have said of my *heart*, had I not thought such a name too much for a mortal creature. I had received from Thee an image which I bore about in my bosom, as the visible mark of Thy favour, and loved it for the graces and virtues which

Thou hadst impressed upon it. Alas, my God! well do I remember how the dear soul, when she saw my danger, cast herself upon her face before Thee, and with so many deep sighs and burning tears, offered her life as the ransom for mine,—how she forgot herself, and had no eyes but for Thee and me—for Thee, from whom she expected consolation and help—for me, whose life, her love to Thee and myself, made her prefer to her own. And Thou wert pleased to make the exchange—leaving me among mortals to serve Thee and the church militant; but enrolling her, to Thy eternal glory, among the immortals of the church triumphant. Thou hast delivered her soul from anguish and death, her eyes from tears, and her feet from falling, and now she walks before Thee in the land of life. Dear was she to me, as Thou knowest, above all things in or of this world, the sun and joy of my house. What more should Thy servant say? Lord, Thou seest how my heart fills at this remembrance, and how it melts me into tears. And yet why should I weep for one from whose eyes all tears have been wiped away? Why mourn for her who shall mourn no more? Why sigh for a saint who has left behind her in this world a blessed and holy memorial, and

is now amid the choirs of angels, singing the new song with Thine elect, and exulting in Thy salvation? I have lost a jewel in time, but I know it is kept in heaven, and I hope to recover it there, and to lose it no more for ever.

It was amidst these and other crosses that the following meditations sprang up, and made their appearance, like flowers beneath a thorny hedge. If they possess any scent of life, any power of Thy Spirit, any of the honey of Thy goodness, which believing souls, like hungry bees, assiduously seek, to Thee, O Father, and to the dear Cross, be all the thanks. At thy feet, I now humbly lay' this bunch of flowers of affliction, asking of Thee one only boon, which is, that Thou wilt now and for ever be my gracious God and Father. For whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire beside Thee.

Thy servant for ever,

CHRISTIAN SCRIVER.

MAGDEBURG, 16th Aug., 1671.

PREFACE

TO THE

INDULGENT READER.

CHRISTIAN Reader! in the name of the Lord Jesus, I here present to you a collection of devout thoughts, which suggested themselves on various occasions to a fellow-pilgrim, called *Gotthold*, and which I received from his mouth, and have taken the pains to write down.

For this I desire no other praise save that which it well becomes a Christian preacher and minister of the Word to seek, the praise of faithfully and diligently promoting the glory of his God, and the good of his neighbour.

My object in this book was to make the creatures converse with thee, or rather to expound and interpret their secret language, and, according to my poor ability, show how all kinds of objects, incidents, and events, may be made to remind thee

of thy God, and to promote thy comfort and growth in Christianity. We read with wonder how Balaam's ass spoke ; it seems to me, however, that the irrational, and even the dumb creatures, all speak to us, from day to day, and from hour to hour, if only we have ears to hear, and hearts to understand them. How otherwise could Job say, "*Ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee : and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee ; or speak to the earth and it shall teach thee ; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.*" (Job xii. 7, 8.) Or David aver that "*the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiworks.*" (Ps. xix. 1.)

Long ago it used to be said that there was a nobleman in France, in whose domains all the wood and stone, when split or hewn, bore the owner's coat of arms, depicted upon them by nature. I shall not inquire into the truth of the story ; but at least it is certain, that the man of piety and observation finds in all the creatures the mark, name, and arms, of his benign and merciful God, and, in these occasions, more fervently to love and praise Him. The Book of Nature,—to say the same thing in other words,—has many-thousand leaves, upon all of which the finger of God has inscribed His goodness, and

He scatters them in every place that we may never want the opportunity of contemplating the height and depth of His love. Happy the man who reads, and devoutly meditates upon them !

It appears to me as if every morning I beheld for the first time this vast theatre of the Divine miracles, the world. Every morning His mercy is new to me. I am never satisfied with beholding the displays of His glory alike in the mighty firmament, the spangled heavens, and other such immense bodies, as in small and humble objects. It happens to me like the hen, who frequently finds a grain of wheat even upon a dunghill.

Let no one imagine that by compositions of this kind, I introduce a novelty. No ; the devout contemplation of nature, and "Incidental Devotions," are as old as the world. Even Adam, the first whom the Most High infested into the possession of the globe, read upon all its objects the name of His Creator, and, like the bee, tasted the sweetness of His love in every little flower. The Lord Himself set up the rainbow in the clouds for the contemplation of Noah, and brought Abraham abroad in the night, and bade him look to the starry heavens. And, doubtless, it was no superficial glance which

the holy patriarchs took of the creation; doubtless they, too, found in it themes for devout reflection of all kinds.

King David, as it appears, composed the forty-second psalm while listening to the lowing of the deer in the wilderness, to which he was forced to flee for shelter and concealment. Even He who was the greatest and most exalted of all teachers, has not only directed us to contemplate the creation, but Himself endeavoured from every casual object to reap instruction for His hearers, and, by the things which perish, to acquaint them with the things which endure. As He sat upon a well, He began to speak to the Samaritan woman of the water which springeth up unto eternal life. (John iv. 6, etc.) While walking, as is supposed, out of the city of Jerusalem, He observed the vineyards and clusters by the wayside, and took occasion to compare Himself to a vine, His heavenly Father to the husbandman, and His followers to the branches. (John xv. 1, etc.) On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He saw the Jews drawing water from the fountain of Siloam, and began to testify to them once more of spiritual and living water; and, being invited to a feast, He embraced the oppor-

tunity to discourse of the great Gospel Supper. (Luke xiv. 16.) In the same way, the Apostle Paul took the hint from the altar of the Athenians to preach of the one living and true God.

In subsequent and even more recent times, many able, pious, and learned divines have trodden in the footsteps of those forerunners, as might be exemplified by instances, were it not superfluous.

No one surely will censure the attempt to prevent evil thoughts, and supply their place by promoting, on every occasion, serious and devout reflection upon God and divine things. My hope at least is, that the reader of this book, when he afterwards meets with any of the objects here made the theme of meditation, will recall one or more of the thoughts. Perhaps, too, even the preacher may learn from it, when in company, or at a feast, in his walks, or on his travels, how to entertain those around him with the same kind of pleasant, and yet profitable discourse, and so help to make them better Christians. He has but to erect his pulpit, as I have done, wherever necessity or duty demands, remembering that it is possible to speak the truth to every one in particular without, as well as within, the walls of a church; but that this must be done with *discretion*

as well as piety, if what he says and teaches is to have the right flavour. When medicine is to be taken by a sickly infant, the best way is to give it first to the nurse, from whom the child imbibes it insensibly with her milk. This duty of the nurse the preacher must often perform, and convert into milk the medicines he prescribes; I mean he must administer them in an agreeable form and courteous way, in the right season, and at the proper time.

My intentions at least were good, and though the success may not in every case correspond with the pious reader's wish, he will yet take the will for the deed, as becomes a Christian, and out of his own fulness supply my lack. The Lord bless and prosper all the good and well-intentioned labours of his faithful ministers, and grant that they may prove neither fruitless nor unrequited!

M. CHRISTIAN SCRIVER.

MAGDEBURG, 1671.

GOTTHOLD'S EMBLEMS.

I.

THE DIAL-PLATE.

JANUARY 1.

ON the first morning of a new year, *Gotthold*, wishing to know the time of day, looked up to the dial of the church spire, where hands, moved by the mechanism within, indicated the hours upon a broad line of gilded numbers. Led into devout reflection, he observed to those around him: I highly approve of marking the hours with letters of gold; it may well admonish us of the value of time, which is indeed too precious to be purchased even with the chief of metals; and of this truth many and all of us need to be reminded. *Chrysauros*, a man of

rank and fortune, had lived an ungodly life; when his end drew near, he beheld a troop of dreadful demons standing around his bed, and waiting for his soul, and exclaimed with a voice of anguish, *Oh, for time! Only till to-morrow! Spare me till to-morrow!* But his entreaties were vain. For him time was past, and the respite terminated. Ah! how much he would have given for even a few hours in which to repent! And yet how seldom we reflect upon the value of time, and how prodigally we spend it! How large the portions of it which we sleep, play, talk, eat, drink, riot away, and in short, unprofitably waste; and how long we deem the little fragments devoted to spiritual exercises, such as converse with God, the study of His Word, devout contemplation, and the search of conscience! The hand upon the dial moves incessantly round, and passing hour after hour, will point at last to that at which you and I shall die; and it will be said of us, He has departed this life. We shall then have done with time, have entered upon eternity, and shall stand before the Judge. Let us therefore diligently improve every hour, and permit none to pass without yielding us some advantage for the world to come. Let every stroke of the clock remind us that

another portion of time is gone, and that we shall have to give account of it to God. "*As we have opportunity (orig., while we have time) let us do good.*"

My God! seal these words upon my heart, and help me to employ the year which is now commencing in a way I may never repent of in eternity.

II.

SNOW.

JANUARY 2.

THERE was a deep covering of snow upon the ground when *Gotthold* thus began: Snow is one of those marvellous things which God brings forth from the treasures of nature; and no satisfactory account has yet been given of the manner of its production, or of the fantastic shapes which its minute particles assume; although able men have made it the subject of long and careful study, many of them in fact, till the whiteness of their heads attests how often they have seen it fall. This, however, is certain, that God uses it according to His pleasure, sometimes for the

good of man, and sometimes to his temporal detriment, or even bodily destruction. Cold although it be, it must, at His behest, serve as a fur to cover and protect the winter's seed. In this sense, the royal prophet says, "The Lord giveth snow like wool;" and country people predict a fruitful season when the *White Goose* hatches a numerous brood. Rubbed, too, upon frozen limbs, it restores them to warmth and animation. On the other hand, how destructive it becomes when it receives its commission from the Divine wrath! In mountainous regions, as we sometimes hear, a mere flake, stirred at first by the touch of a bird's wing, or other accidental cause, grows to such a magnitude, as it tumbles from the heights, that on reaching the valley, it crushes and entombs the abodes of men, and even whole villages and towns. How often, too, do we read of the floods and calamities which ensue in Spring, when the snow of the mountains, suddenly dissolved by the rain or heat, rushes down and swells the brooks and rivers till they overflow their banks!

Lord God! all depends upon Thy favour or frown. Thou canst make that which is cold itself a protection from cold, and even a means of generating heat. Baneful things cease to be baneful when overruled

by Thy grace. The most useful lose their utility if Thou withhold Thy good influence ; and in Thy hand the most minute may become the instrument of a mighty judgment.

III.

THE SNOW-BALL.

JANUARY 3.

ONE mild winter day, some boys had made a snow-ball, and rolled it along until it had grown too large and heavy for them to move. Here, said *Gotthold*, we have an agreeable emblem of human cares. These are often little and insignificant, but we magnify them by impatience and unbelief, till they become greater than we can bear. Many a one keeps night and day revolving his trouble in his mind to no better purpose than these boys. All they accomplish by their pains is to set up for those who pass a sign that children have been at play, and he gains nothing by his but a head more confused, and a heart more sorrowful than before. We are

often reluctant to give God the honour of caring for us, and, as if He were drowsy or negligent, offer to assist His wisdom by our folly. But we thereby lose rather than gain. Besides, what a high offence it is, if, when He opens the bosom of His compassion, and bids us boldly cast all our cares into it, we treat Him with distrust !

My God ! *Thou hast formed the eye, and shalt Thou not see ? Thou hast planted the ear, and shalt Thou not hear ? Thou hast made the heart, and shalt Thou not take thought ?* I will roll my trouble no farther than to Thee, or, if that be beyond my might, I will admit Thee into my heart, and show Thee there what is too heavy for me. *Thou wilt then know, though I may not, by what means it may be removed.*

IV.

THE COLD.

JANUARY 4.

A CHILD had continued at play in the open air till its hands became livid with cold. At length it

rushed into the house, and holding them to the fire, experienced acute pain, which is the usual consequence of subjecting benumbed limbs suddenly to the influence of heat. *Gotthold* pitied the little fellow, and then remarked: Many and bitter are the pains which prey upon the human body in this world! There are headache, toothache, earache, and aches in every limb, more numerous than can be told. If, however, even in time, and for man's correction, a righteous God subjects him to sufferings so great, what must be the case in hell, when He pours upon the reprobate the full measure of His wrath? In the present instance, as we see, the pain proceeds from the conflict of heat with cold; and so it will be in hell. The victims there will burn in everlasting flames, and at the same time wail and chatter with their teeth. Nor can there be any comparison between the brief anguish of this child, and the torment which shall endure for ever! But so intent are children upon their play, that they neither feel the present cold, nor fear the future pain; and we who are older act a similar part. We pursue the folly of the world, permit ourselves to be beguiled by its paltry pleasures, and all too easily forget the penalties which follow sin, both in time and eternity.

Ah, my God ! subject me to any amount of torment in the present life, that will exempt me from the pains of hell hereafter !



V.

THE CHARCOAL FIRE.

JANUARY 5.

GOTTHOLD, attempting one day to mitigate the cold of his chamber with live charcoal in a pot, recollected having read of persons being suffocated by its fumes. Alas ! thought he with himself, how easily we are undone, and how various the ways in which this vain life of ours may be extinguished ! There is nothing, how useful soever it may be, which may not likewise, at the Divine command, become injurious or even deadly. In saying this, he heaved a deep sigh, and agitating with his breath the white ashes in the pot, they flew about his head. See, said he, *how proud are dust and ashes !* The faintest breath moves them, and up they fly into the air. Still they continue mere dust

•

and ashes, and must again descend. And we are like them. The most trivial cause—one word of praise or some groundless fancy—suffices to make us lofty-minded, and we tower in thought, I know not how high, above our fellows. All the while, however, we are but vile dust, and *though often when alive, we would fain have filled one half of the world, yet after we have lain for a little in the grave, there is scarce enough of us to make a handful.*

My God! I thank Thee for such a recollection. Thoughts of the vanity of human life are themselves live coals, for they warm the heart into a lively fear of Thee.

VI.

THE DROWNED MAN.

JANUARY 6.

THE magistrate of a well-known town, accompanied by some acquaintances, had gone on public business, to a neighbouring village, across a frozen river. On their return in the evening, they did

not reflect that the intervening thaw might have softened the ice and rendered it unsafe: and so, unsuspecting of danger, they proceeded along, the magistrate taking the lead, conversing with his companions, and expecting soon to reach the opposite bank. Alas! the shore he reached was that of death! Slipping a foot, and the ice breaking, he fell into the water, struggled for a while, and sank, leaving a disconsolate widow and several helpless children to mourn his fate. Weeks elapsed before his body was found.

Here, said *Gotthold*, when he heard the story, we have another instance, which may serve as a mirror to show us what we are. Children of men, alas! what is your life, but a soft and slippery sheet of ice, which breaks, now here, now there, and plunges you, one after another, into the flood of death and oblivion. This you see, but do not take to heart, and you pace heedlessly along, although at every step the ice bends beneath your feet, till in a moment you disappear. Wherefore, be at all times ready, and *while life lasts, prepare a refuge for your soul, that if suddenly called upon to depart, it may know whither to fly.*

Lord God! be not angry with me. Behold, I

take upon me to speak unto Thee, although I am but dust and ashes. (Gen. xviii. 27.) Surprise me not by a sudden death, lest it find me unprepared; neither keep me too long in the mortal struggle, that my patience do not fail. But I will be dumb and hold my peace, for Thou wilt order it aright. (Ps. xxxix. 2.)

VII.

THE CHILD LEARNING TO WALK.

JANUARY 7.

A CHILD, just beginning to walk, was exercising its feeble steps with the help of chairs and benches, while the mother sat at some distance, and with endearing words, and a sight of the breast, enticed it to quit hold and advance to her alone and unsupported. This at last it did, cautiously, setting one foot before another till it came within her reach, and then, in an ecstasy of delight, fell into her arms. *Gotthold* watched the scene with peculiar pleasure,

and thought with himself: Most beautifully is the Divine training of my soul here shadowed forth ! What else is my Christianity but the timid tottering of this little one ? What all my perfection but imperfection felt and deplored ? What my strength but weakness ? The Saviour, however, acts towards me a mother's part, attracts me with the sweet words of His promises, uncovers the breasts of His grace and everlasting consolations, and opens and extends to me His arms.

Well then, Lord Jesus, I will creep if I cannot walk ; I will take hold of Thy word. When I stumble, Thou wilt support me ; when I fall, Thou wilt hold out thy Cross, and help me with it to rise again, until at length I reach the place where Thou art, and with all my weaknesses, anxieties, and wants, cast myself into Thy bosom.

· VIII.

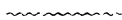
THE MONEY SCALES.

JANUARY 8.

AN opulent merchant having received a sum of money, was putting the ducats one by one into a pair of scales, in order to ascertain that they were not too light. "For my part," said *Gotthold*, who was present, "I should be more afraid of their being too heavy." "How so?" inquired the merchant. "Do you not think," rejoined *Gotthold*, "that money is too heavy when bedewed with the blood of the poor, the sweat of the laborious, and the tears of the widow and the orphan, or when loaded with the curses of those who, by fraud or violence, have been robbed of it. I will hope, however, that there are no pieces of this description in that heap of yours, or rather, I will not fear that there are any. Suffer me, however, without offence, to express the wish that you will always make your conscience your scales, and weigh in it your dollars and ducats to

ascertain that they are of proper weight, and have been honestly acquired. *Many a man never learns, until he is struggling with death, how difficult, or rather impossible, it is to force a soul, burdened with unrighteous gain, through the straight gate which leadeth unto life.* Take heed, then, that no such gain ever burdens yours. The more he carries, the more the pilgrim sweats and pants as he climbs the steep; and the more the conscience is oppressed with dishonesty and fraud, the harder will the struggle of a deathbed be."

O, my God! withhold from me the wealth to which tears, and sighs, and curses cleave. *Better none at all than wealth like that!*



IX.

THE TWO MIRRORS.

JANUARY 9.

A YOUNG lady, otherwise well-behaved and esteemed, made an idol of the beauty which she had received from nature, and often laboured by ornaments to

improve it. For this purpose she had two mirrors in her chamber, placed opposite to each other, so that when she stood between them she could see her figure behind as well as before ; the one at her back reflecting the image into the one in front, and there presenting it to her view. *Gotthold* saw this, with some surprise at the ingenuity of the device. At the same time he said : Are you aware that beauty when unadorned and left to its own native loveliness, is often more admired than that which paint and ornament have been used to set off. The rose is of itself beautiful and fragrant ; sprinkle it with balm and you only injure its innate perfume. *Over anxiety to be beautiful is to be half-ugly.* Be moderate, therefore, and delight not too greatly in the verdant gourd of your comeliness, lest God prepare a worm to smite it that it wither. I will, however, recommend to you two other mirrors in which you may contemplate yourself with profit.—The one is the Past, the other the Future. That will show you how great the mercies you have, all your life-long, received from God, and how small the returns of gratitude you have made Him ; this will exhibit the various changes which still await you, viz., pale sickness, sorrowful old age, certain death, and at

last the terrors of judgment. Or would you prefer two other mirrors? In that case set up continually before your eyes the Divine Justice, which sees all things, even our most secret thoughts, and will, in due time, bring them to judgment; this will guard you against pride and security. On the other hand, look also at the Divine Mercy which incessantly follows after the sinner, and consumes his transgressions in the flame of love; this will keep you from despondency and excess of sorrow. Such an employment will be as much more profitable than that in which you are now engaged, as the immortal soul is nobler than the vile body.



X.

THE TANGLED YARN.

JANUARY 10.

A WOMAN had put a hank of yarn upon a reel, intending to wind it into a ball; but as the thread would not run as she wished, she lost patience, and pulled it to and fro. This, however, only made

the evil worse, for it multiplied the ends until she no longer knew which to draw. *Gotthold* looked on in silence, but thought with himself: I now see how it happens that the interference of third parties only complicates quarrels. The reason is, because they bring to them more of needless anger and zeal than of judicious moderation and skill. Many a matter might easily be settled if we only knew the right end by which to take hold of whimsical and wilful minds. Worldly disputes are almost all like this yarn; whosoever ventures to meddle with them, except with a meek and sober heart, will do no good. It is folly for any man to expect that all things shall or can be made square with his views. He acts a wiser part who tries to accomodate himself to seasons and circumstances, so far as he can with a safe conscience. Many a one complains of the tangled yarns and whimsical characters with which he has to do, without being conscious that his own hat covers as much oddity, and that that gives other people no less occasion to complain of him.

My God! In my vocation I must daily expect to meet with tangled yarns. Give me a meek and prudent heart, that I may always find the right end to draw!

XI.

THE PAPER MILL.

JANUARY 11.

A VISIT to a paper-mill suggested to *Gotthold* the following train of thought: And so paper—that article so useful in human life, that repository of all the arts and sciences, that minister of all governments, that broker in all trade and commerce, that second memory of the human mind, that stable pillar of an immortal name—takes its origin from vile rags! The rag-dealer trudges on foot, or drives his cart through the towns and villages, and his arrival is the signal for searching every corner, and gathering every old and useless shred. These he takes to the mill, and there they are picked, washed, mashed, shaped, and sized, in short, formed into a fabric beautiful enough to venture unabashed even into the presence of monarchs and princes. This reminds me of the resurrection of my mortal body. When deserted by the soul, I know not

what better the body is than a worn and rejected rag. Accordingly, it is buried in the earth, and there gnawed by worms, and reduced to dust and ashes. If, however, man's art and device can produce so pure and white a fabric as paper from filthy rags, what should hinder God by His mighty power to raise from the grave this vile body of mine, and refine and fashion it like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ ! (Phil. iii. 21.)

Yes, God of might ? *Thou canst do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.* (Eph. iii. 20.) For this reason I shall be willing and happy to die whenever it is Thy will, for I know, that instead of this body, which is needy and weak, vile and corruptible, Thou wilt give me another, which will be holy and perfect, vigorous and immortal, and wilt inscribe upon me, as upon a spotless sheet, divine wisdom, celestial brightness, and ineffable glory.

XII.

THE MOTHER PLAYING WITH HER CHILD.

JANUARY 12.

A MOTHER was amusing herself with her child, who might be about two years and a half old. After giving it the breast, and fondling and kissing it, she asked, Shall I now die? and, suiting the action to the word, closed her eyes, and lay motionless and still. The child gazed at her for a while, and then began to weep bitterly, as if some dreadful thing had happened. On this she pretended suddenly to revive, addressed some sprightly words to the little one, kissed it more affectionately than before, and the consequence was, that now it sobbed and wept for joy, as it had previously done for sorrow. *Gott-hold* was present, and could scarce refrain from weeping too. He reflected: This is just what sometimes takes place between myself and God. Under outward and inward temptations, I lose all sense of His comfort, help, and protection, and then it seems

to my burdened heart as if He were dead. In the end, however, I always find that He has been sporting with me, and intended merely to try my faith, love, prayers, tears, and aspirations. And oh! how great is my delight when He once more sheds upon me the immeasurable flood of His loving kindness and grace!

XIII.

THE SENSIBLE WIFE.

JANUARY 13.

I RECOLLECT, proceeded *Gotthold*, on the same occasion, having been told the following story:—A prudent and pious lady observing her husband deeply dejected on account of some misfortune which had befallen him, so that he could not sleep at night for care, pretended in the morning to be still more disconsolate than he, and gave way to lamentations and tears. As she had spoken cheerfully to him the evening before, and exhorted him to dismiss his sorrow, he was astonished and asked the cause of her

sudden grief. Hesitating a little, she replied that she had been dreaming, and that it seemed to her that a messenger had come from heaven, and brought the news that God was dead, and that all the angels were weeping. "Foolish woman," said the husband, "you know right well that God cannot die!" "Indeed," replied the wife, "and if that be so certain, how comes it that you are now indulging your sorrow as immoderately as if He really did no longer exist, or, at least, as if He was unable to set measure and bounds to our affliction, or mitigate its severity, or convert it into a blessing. My dear husband, learn to trust in Him, and to sorrow like a Christian. Think of the old proverb,

'What need to grieve,
If God still live.'

Verily, my Father, didst Thou not live, I would not myself wish to live another hour! And if sometimes Thou feignest to be dead, I will not cease to rouse Thee with my prayers and tears, until I sensibly experience again, that Thou art the health of my countenance and my God.

XIV.

THE DARK NIGHT.

JANUARY 14.

ONE night, when there was no moon, *Gotthold* awoke, and finding the darkness so thick that he could not, as the saying goes, see his hand before his eyes, reflected thus : Wicked men, it is true, instigated by him who is its prince, often abuse darkness, and pervert it to the commission of acts of guilt and shame ; but I see in it traces, which few suspect, of the hidden goodness and wisdom of God. Night, with its darkness, serves to cool and refresh the drooping plants, watering them with wholesome dew. It sharpens the sight by giving the eyes time to recover their optic power. It is of equal benefit to the mind. By day, distracted with the multiplicity of the objects presented by the senses, the mind cannot duly weigh them all ; but night, wrapping the head in her black mantle, secludes us from the external world, and gives it solitude and leisure for deep and calm re-

flection. Besides, what is darkness but a sombre curtain which God in His kindness hangs about our beds, that our rest may be tranquil and undisturbed, whilst He who neither slumbers nor sleeps, keeps watch, like the mother over her child?

Grant, O God, that when I awake in the night, I may think of Thee, and employ my mind in contemplating Thy inconceivable goodness. And do Thou also, amidst the darkness, cause Thy light to shine into my soul!

XV.

THE BED.

JANUARY 15.

LAYING himself down once more upon his bed, *Gott-hold* began: Neither let me forget, O God of love, to thank Thee for this little seat of repose. It, too, is in some measure a holy place. Here, how often has my wearied body found for hours a grateful rest, such as the immortal soul enjoys in Thee alone! Here have I sent up many a secret sigh to Heaven.

Here have I often, when forsaken by sleep, directed my thoughts to Thee, who art the light of my darkness. Here, Thy grace has often hovered over me and been my covering. Around this bed of mine, Thy holy angels have stood for many a night, like faithful and attentive watchmen, and scared away him who goes about as a roaring lion. I praise Thee, O God, for this and every other gift and comfort which Thou hast vouchsafed to me. Ah, me! how hard is the bed on which many lie, and how poor a covering their miserable sacks and rags! And yet what have I given to Thee more than they? In this, too, O Father, I recognise Thy marvellous grace! My bed, however, should also remind me of the grave, which will be my bed at last, the resting-place of my body till the day of judgment. Who knows, but that even to-morrow I may be removed from the one into the other—from the down into the clods? For I am a mortal man, and old enough at every hour to die. Well then, my God, should this be Thy pleasure, I will now once more, and for the last time in this mortal state, thank Thee for the many mercies, spiritual and temporal, which, in the course of my life, Thou hast bestowed upon me. Once more, I will humbly

repeat my supplication for the pardon of all my sins, wittingly or unwittingly committed. If, however, O God, my life shall be prolonged, and I shall see the light of another morning, give me grace to die to myself and to the world, and to live always to Thee. Let neither death nor life ever separate me from Thee and Thy love.

XVI.

THE WOLF.

JANUARY 16.

GOTTHOLD riding one winter's day into the country, observed a wolf skulking behind a flock of sheep, but which was quickly put to flight. He took occasion to say : The wolf is a very destructive and malicious creature, and if it can break the fence and enter the fold, continues its murderous work so long as one of the sheep is left alive. Its ferocity, however, has been in some degree restrained and disabled by the Almighty Himself, for not only has He lamed its hind legs and so impaired its speed,

but has sown the seeds of its destruction in its own body. For, as I have learned from books, and heard from persons of experience, a worm is bred in its kidneys, which at last destroys its life. Mark in this the type of the wicked and cruel man. For a while, such a character raves and rages in the world, as long, in fact, as the Most High is pleased to wink at his iniquity. Afterwards, however, unless he repent, either his own iniquities take him, and he is holden with the cords of his sins (Prov. v. 22), or the worm of an uneasy conscience gnaws away his heart, or the devil and death become his pursuers, and hunt him down.

XVII.

THE CHURCH SPIRES.

JANUARY 17.

GOTTHOLD seeing in a certain town the church spires mounting almost to the clouds, began to wonder that our forefathers had expended so much industry and wealth upon an object which seems

to minister to nothing but superfluous pomp and outward show. After some reflection, however, he remarked, that their intentions were no doubt good and their object praiseworthy. Does not such a tall and stately spire seem like a giant figure pointing upwards! There can be no doubt, our worthy ancestors meant that every church should direct our eyes to heaven, and thereby admonish us that the doctrine preached in the sanctuary below, is the only way to the mansions above. As often, then, as we see such a spire, let us recollect that here we *have no continuing city, but must seek one to come.* (Heb. xiii. 14.)



XVIII.

THE POVERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF THE RICH.

JANUARY 18.

THIS happened one day to be the subject of conversation in a company, and almost all who were present had instances of it to relate. On inquiring into its causes, some maintained that it was owing to the foolish love of wealthy parents, who trained

their children in youth more to luxury than labour, more to wasting than thrift, and thus made them bad economists. Others supposed the cause to be, that great wealth is seldom amassed by one man, except at the expense of many others, and without the tears of widows, and the sweat of the poor, in short, without injustice; and that for that reason the curse of God cleaves to it, and fritters it away. To these views, *Gotthold* did not object, aware, in particular cases, of their truth. He insisted, however, that to the children of the rich, poverty is a secret blessing, inasmuch as it takes from them the key which opens all the doors of sin, or, in other words, wealth. Nurtured, he said, as they have been, in superfluity and self-indulgence of all kinds, in total ignorance of the cross, and insensibility to the hardships and miseries of others, they would, if left in this state, care little or nothing for heaven. God, therefore, permits their temporal possessions to melt away, that they may thereby be led to despise earthly things, and seek, with all the greater ardour, those that are heavenly.

O God! vouchsafe to my children Thy enduring grace, and even in the midst of poverty, they will then be rich enough.

XIX.

THE CHILD AT PLAY.

JANUARY 19.

A LITTLE boy was running about in an apartment, amusing himself as children are accustomed to do. His money was potsherds, his house bits of wood, his horse a stick, and his child a doll. In the same apartment sat his father, at a table occupied with important matters of business, which he noted and arranged for the future benefit of his young companion. The child frequently ran to him, asked many foolish questions, and begged one thing after another as necessary for his diversion. The father answered briefly, did not intermit his work, but all the time kept a watchful eye over the child, to save him from any serious fall or injury. *Gotthold* was a spectator of the scene, and thought with himself: How beautiful an adumbration of the fatherly care of God! We, too, who are old children, course about in the world, and often

play at games which are much more foolish than those of our little ones ; we collect and scatter, build and demolish, plant and pluck up, ride and drive, eat and drink, sing and play, and fancy that we are performing great exploits, well worthy of God's special attention. Meanwhile, however, the Omniscient is sitting by, and writing our days in His book. He orders and executes all that is to befall us, overruling it for our best interests in time and eternity ; and yet His eye never ceases to watch over us, and the childish sports in which we are engaged, that we may meet with no deadly mischief.

My God ! such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, and I cannot attain unto it, but I shall thank and praise Thee for it. O my Father ! withhold not from me Thy care and inspection, and, above all, at those times when, perhaps, like this little one, I am playing the fool.

XX.

THE OPEN SMELLING BOTTLE.

JANUARY 20.

GOTTHOLD had, for some purpose, taken from a cupboard a vial of rose-water, and, after using it, had inconsiderately left it unstopped. Observing it some time after, he found that all the strength and sweetness of the perfume had evaporated. This, thought he with himself, is a striking emblem of a heart fond of the world, and open to the impressions of outward objects. How vain it is to take such a heart to the house of God, and fill it with the precious essence of the roses of paradise, which are the truths of Scripture, or raise in it a glow of devotion, if we afterwards neglect to close the outlet,—that is, to keep the Word in an honest and good heart! (Luke viii. 15.) How vain to hear much, but to retain little, and practice less! How vain to excite in our heart sacred and holy emotions, unless we are afterwards careful to close the outlet by dili-

gent reflection and prayer, and so preserve it unspotted from the world. Neglect this, and the strength and spirit of devotion evaporates, and leaves only a lifeless froth behind.

Lord Jesus, enable me to keep Thy word like a lively cordial in my heart. Quicken it there by Thy Spirit and grace. Seal it, also, in my soul, that it may preserve for ever its freshness and its power !

XXI.

THE MOTE IN THE EYE.

JANUARY 21.

A CHILD happening, while at play, to get a mote into his eye, kept rubbing and wiping it for a while, but with no other effect than to increase the pain and inflammation. At last he ran and complained to his father, who put a small pearl into it, and bade him close and roll it about several times, whereupon the pearl dropped out with the mote adhering to it. This suggested to *Gotthold* the following thoughts : The eye is the light of the body. It sees all things

presented to it, but not itself. It is, however, as the present instance shows, an extremely sensitive organ, and cannot endure even a mote, but weeps and aches until it is relieved. It thus affords us a true emblem of conscience, which, although itself little noticed, perceives, apprehends, and, so to speak, keeps a record of all things. In one respect, indeed, conscience is superior to the eye; for while the latter sees only by day, the former sees also by night, and takes minute cognizance of the works of darkness. Now, true it is that many, especially when blinded by the delusions of self-love and carnal security, look upon sin as only a mote. But ah! with what bitter pain and anguish the mote, which seems so small, can wring the conscience! How it aches and weeps! And, in such a case, O God of mercy, there is no help but with Thee. The Gospel of Jesus is the pearl of great price. (Matt. xiii. 46.) Dropped by Thy hand into the wounded and troubled heart, it takes sin and all its anguish away, so that we find rest to our souls, and learn to serve Thee with alacrity and delight.

Help me, O my God! to walk at all times cautiously and circumspectly, and guard me by Thy grace from ever wounding my conscience.

XXII.

THE DIAMOND.

JANUARY 22.

GOTTHOLD, inspecting the operations of a goldsmith, who was setting a diamond, saw him place a dark leaf in the capsule, which it was intended to fill. On inquiring for what purpose this was done, he was told that it improved the brightness and sparkling of the jewel. Reflecting upon the matter, he found that such would naturally be the effect, and exclaimed: My God, here I have a type of Thy grace, which shines most brightly and beautifully in our deepest distress, or when employed to overlay the blackness of our guilt. I do not wonder so much that it irradiated an Enoch, a Noah, a Daniel, and a Virgin Mary, as that it shed its enlightening and quickening rays on David the adulterer, on Peter, who denied his Master with an oath, on Paul the persecutor and blasphemer, and on that great sinner, Mary Magdalene.

XXIII.

CURSING.

JANUARY 23.

ONE day, in passing a house, *Gotthold's* ear caught a dreadful curse, which an exasperated female, with flashing eyes, and trembling limbs, pronounced upon one of her family. A pretty specimen of a Christian art thou, he said, who, though called unto blessing (1 Peter iii. 9.), preferrest cursing for thyself and thy children! What are curses but bitter and infernal gall cast up from a troubled and raging heart? As the froth is skimmed from a seething pot, so when the heart boils with rage, curses are the scum, the tongue is the ladle, and Satan the cook. Can we wonder that all blessing now vanishes from the world, when so wicked a practice prevails, and is looked upon as only a venial sin, if a sin at all? It treads under foot the mercy and blessing of God, and the blood of the Lord Jesus, and does despite unto the Spirit of Grace (Heb. x. 29); where this is done angels weep and fly away, and demons assemble and exult for joy; bread is changed into

a stone, and drink into gall, and the poison of asps. Why should a man be surprised to see himself and his family reduced, crippled, impoverished, and smitten with sore and lingering disease, when he reflects how often they have swallowed their meat and drink, mingled with curses, which have gone into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones? (Psalm cix. 18.)

Save me, O my God, from this sinful and unchristian habit. Grant that I may always bless and never curse even my enemies. Though they curse, do Thou bless me (Psalm cix. 28); for he whom Thou blessest, O Lord, shall be blessed for ever! (1 Chron. xvii. 27.)



XXIV.

THE LEMON-PEEL.

JANUARY 24.

A SIMPLE but pious man complained to *Gotthold* that, in conversing with God, he often felt at a loss for words. Although, said he, on other occasions I have no difficulty in making myself understood, still, I can never find such language for my God as His

Majesty, the confidence I place in Him, and the greatness of my necessities, seem to me to require.

Gotthold, at the time, had in his hand a lemon, from which he had just pared a thin and transparent peel. Presenting it to him, he said : Only in the surface skin, and not in the white below, is the strong fragrance of this fruit contained. And the same, be assured, is the case with your prayer. However thin and meagre may be the language in which it is expressed, the fragrance of its fervent piety is strong enough to pierce the clouds. Words, without faith and devotion, are useless, like the white under-skin of this fruit ; but faith and devotion, without words, are not despised by Him who knows the heart. Ejaculatory prayers are the most powerful means of dispelling the troubles of the mind. A single sigh, breathed from the bottom of a burthened heart, is a loud cry in the ear of God. Our prayers are most fervent when the lips are silent and the tongue at rest. No doubt words are sometimes needful in prayer ; but it is on our own account (that when we pray, we may know what we have prayed for), and never on God's, to whom our wants are already known. Nay, He sometimes leaves us to feel the lack of words for the very purpose of weaning us

from depending on ourselves, and our own ability, more than on Him and His grace. Do in future as King David did, who, you will confess, knew the art of prayer. When he conversed with God, and was dissatisfied with the way in which he did it, he exclaimed: *And what can David say more unto Thee, for Thou Lord God knowest Thy servant.* (2 Sam. vii. 20.) If you cannot find expressions, cast your heart, with all its concerns, into the bosom of your God, and He will read in it what you wish to say.

My God, Thou art a Spirit; grant that I may worship *Thee in spirit and in truth.* (John iv. 24.)

XXV.

THE TREES PREMATURELY IN BLOSSOM.

JANUARY 25.

IN the year of our Lord 1662, the winter was, in many places, so mild and warm, that the trees began, some to bud and some to blossom, as early as the month of January. This reminded *Gotthold*

of the words of our Saviour : *Behold the fig tree and all the trees ; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.* (Luke xxi. 29–31.) Thereupon he lifted his voice and said : I doubt not that all things in heaven are prepared and ready. The holy angels are marshalled with their trumpets at their lips, and wait the Lord's signal to peal in the last and great day of judgment. The multitude of the elect have put on their white robes, and stand with palms in their hands, ready to accompany the Saviour on His final advent. The many mansions in the house of God are swept and garnished. The heavens make a noise, the earth quakes, the winds howl, the seas roar, all creation waiteth and groaneth and travaileth with pain. Methinks, O Saviour, I hear Thee say, *Surely I come quickly*, and my soul answers, *Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.* (Rev. xxii. 20.)

XXVI.

THE LOCK.

JANUARY 26.

A LOCK was shown to *Gotthold*, constructed of rings which were severally inscribed with certain letters, and could be turned round until the letters represented the name *Jesus*. It was only when the rings were disposed in this manner that the lock could be opened. The invention pleased him beyond measure, and he exclaimed: O that I could put such a lock as this upon my heart! Our hearts are already locked, no doubt, but generally with a lock of quite another kind. Many need only to hear the words, *Gain, Honour, Pleasure, Riches, Revenge*, and their heart opens in a moment, whereas, to the Saviour and to His holy name, it continues shut.

Lord Jesus, engrave Thou Thy name with Thine own finger upon my heart, that it may remain closed to worldly joy and worldly pleasure, self-interest, fading honour, and low revenge, and open only to Thee!

XXVII.

THE TOUCH-STONE.

JANUARY 27.

A WEALTHY miser was seated at a table overspread with gold pieces. Such of them as he feared were of base metal, he rubbed upon a touch-stone, and such as he feared were too light, he weighed in a pair of scales. Here, said *Gotthold* to himself, is one stone making use of another. For, what better than the stone he uses, is a man like this, who knows about nothing but gold and silver, especially as his heart is petrified, and insensible to poverty. I read of the city of God being built of all manner of precious stones and pearls, but there is no mention of any such as this. (Rev. xxi. 18-21.) I wish with all my heart, however, that the children of light were as wise in their generation as the children of this world—that we made the word and will of God the touch-stone of all our words and thoughts, and works, and that we proved all things,

and held fast that which is good. (1 Thess. v. 21.) Our scales should be our conscience, our weights the truths of Scripture, and with these should we test all we take in, and all we give out.



XXVIII.

THE PILLS.

JANUARY 28.

AN invalid who had been ordered a couple of pills, took them very absurdly, for, in place of swallowing them at once, he rolled them about in his mouth, ground them to pieces, and so tasted their full bitterness. *Gotthold* was present, and thus mused : The insults and calumnies of a slanderer and adversary are bitter pills, and all do not understand the art of swallowing without chewing them. To the Christian, however, they are wholesome in many ways. They remind him of his guilt ; they try his meekness and patience ; they show him what he needs to guard against, and at last they redound to his honour and glory in the sight of Him for

whose sake they were endured. In respect of the pills of slander, however, as well as the others, it is advisable not to roll them about continually in our minds, or judge of them according to the flesh, and the world's opinion. This will only increase their bitterness, spread the savour of it to the tongue, and fill the heart with proportional enmity. The true way is to *swallow, keep silence, and forget*. We must inwardly devour our grief, and say: *I will be dumb and not open my mouth, because Thou didst it*. (Psalm xxxix. 2, 9.) The best antidotes to the bitterness of slander, are the sweet promises and consolations of Scripture, of which not the least is this: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven*. (Matt. v. 11, 12.)

Alas, my God! how hard it is to swallow the pills of obloquy, to bless them that curse me, to do good to them that hate me, and to pray for them that despitefully use me! *But, Lord, as Thou wilt have it so, give it as Thou wilt have it; for it is a matter in which, without Thy grace, I can do nothing!*

XXIX.

THE NIGGARDLY DOG.

JANUARY 29.

Gotthold one day observed a dog slinking past with a bone in its mouth, cautiously looking round, and now and then stopping to listen. From this it was easy to see that, according to the custom of its kind, it meant to bury the remnant of its meal, as in fact it immediately did. *Gotthold* was reminded of the saying of the wise son of Sirach: "Riches are not comely for a niggard, and what should an envious man do with money?" (Ecclus. xiv. 3.) This animal, he proceeded to observe, has saved a morsel, or has lost its appetite, as it is commonly thought to do before an impending storm, and yet it grudges another what it cannot itself devour, and therefore buries it out of sight in the earth. The covetous show the same disposition, for they, too, hide their gathered stores, both from themselves and others. It is a fact I could not have conceived possible, had I not met actual instances of it, that there are people

in the world who bury their treasures, and even on their deathbeds, in spite of all remonstrances, prefer leaving them concealed in the earth rather than that they should fall into the hands of others. Such persons are dogs indeed. They would not be the better for all the money in the world, and what is worse, *they shall never enter the city of God.* (Rev. xxii. 15.)

Oh, my God, who art God alone, keep me from ever making an idol of wealth. This would lead me into apostacy from Thee, and entail the forfeiture of my salvation. Whatever is temporal pertains to the present world, and should be devoted to its use. *Blessed is that man who, by trading in temporal things, can gain eternal profits.*

XXX.

ANGRY ALMS.

JANUARY 30.

GOTTHOLD was one day occupied with important business, and deeply absorbed in thought, when his daughter unexpectedly entered the room, bringing

a paper stating the case of a poor widow, with the causes of her penury, and soliciting an alms in her behalf. Losing his temper, he spoke harshly to the girl, and, in an ill-humour, flung to her the sum she asked. He soon, however, recollected himself, and cried out : Wretched man that I am ! how fair the show which my Christianity often presents, to myself at least, and how boldly I venture to say, " Lord Jesus, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee," and yet, now that my Saviour has come and craved a mite for this poor widow, as a practical evidence of my affection, I take offence at Him for disturbing my poor thoughts, though for so short a time, and so good a cause. Go, now, and plume thyself on thy faith and piety ! My God ! Thou invitest me to come to Thee whenever my pleasure leads, or my necessities compel me ; and, come when I may, never is my coming unseasonable, or inopportune. Thou hast the whole world to govern, and yet I trouble Thee not though I break in at morning, noon, or night, and claim an alms from Thy mercy. How conceited I must be to reckon my concerns and cogitations of greater moment than the prayers and sighs of my suffering fellow-Christian ! I now see that sin is rashness,

and have good cause henceforth to give a more gracious reception to the Lord Jesus in His members, lest in my hour of need He turn His back upon me. God loveth a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. ix. 7.) A benefaction to the poor should be like oil which, when poured from one vessel into another, flows in silence, and with a soft and gentle fall. *An alms reluctantly bestowed is like a rose spoiled and discoloured with the fumes of sulphur*, like sanded flour, or over-salted meat. He who exercises charity with a reluctant heart and angry words, resembles the cow which yields her milk, but overturns the pail with her foot.



XXXI.

WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP.

JANUARY 31.

THERE was a pious lady who could not witness the distress and lamentations of a fellow-creature without giving way to tears herself. These, however, she endeavoured to conceal, and blushed for shame if

they were nevertheless observed. On such an occasion, *Gotthold* said to her: Why are you ashamed? You ought rather to look upon it as a special grace that you have received from God, the gift of weeping with them that weep. The tears that drop from your eyes testify that the sorrow of your fellow-Christian has touched your heart. As gold, which is the most ductile and fusible of metals, claims superiority to all the rest, so among men the softest natures are always the most noble. Remember, however, when the heart is moved, not to allow the mouth and hand to be idle, but, to the utmost of your ability, endeavour, by word and deed, to help your neighbour. He who has promised that whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward (Matt. x. 40), will also have respect to the tears which you shed from Christian sympathy.

XXXII.

THE UNKNOWN FRIEND.

FEBRUARY 1.

ONE day a person who, by the calamities of war, sickness, and other affliction, had been reduced from a state of affluence to penury, came to *Gotthold* in great distress. He complained that he had just met one of his former acquaintances, who was even not distantly related to him, but that he had not condescended to bow, far less to speak to him, and had turned his eyes away, and passed him as if he had been a stranger. O, Sir, he exclaimed, with a sigh, How it pained me ! I felt as if a dagger had pierced my heart ! *Gotthold* replied : Don't think it strange at all. It is the way of the world to look high, and to pass unnoticed that which is humble and lowly. I know, however, of *One* who, though, He dwelleth on high, humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth (Psalm cxiii. 5, 6), and of whom the royal

prophet testifies : Thou hast known my soul in adversity. (Psalm xxxi. 7.) O yes ; though we have lost our rich attire, and come to Him in rags ; though our forms be wasted because of grief, and waxed old (Psalm vi. 7, Luth. vers.) ; though sickness and sorrow have consumed our beauty like a moth (Psalm xxxix. 11) ; though blushes, and tears, and dust overspread our face (Psalm lxix. 7), He still recognizes, and is not ashamed to own us. Comfort yourself with this, for what harm will it do you at last, though men disown, if God the Lord have not forgotten you ?

XXXIII.

THE HOT COALS.

FEBRUARY 2,

ONE of his domestics having dropped some grease upon his dress, *Gotthold* bade him put live coals into a silver spoon, cover the stain with blotting paper, and apply the spoon to it. The consequence was, that the paper imbibed the grease, and the spot which it had discoloured could scarcely be

recognised. At the same time he took occasion to admonish him thus : Learn here how to deal with your neighbour's faults, and how to bear yourself towards him when he is offended and hostile. To render railing for railing, and bitterness for gall, does not become the Christian, as is testified by the example of Him whose name He bears. (1 Peter ii. 23.) This only makes bad worse. But to pray for those who have injured us, to treat them with meekness and moderation, to lose no opportunity of showing them good-will and placability, to do them good according to our means, and save them from loss—all this is to heap live coals upon their head and heart, and will have the effect of obliterating many a deep-seated spot of enmity. From acting in this manner, let not the justice of your cause, or the most unspotted innocence restrain you. Though not guilty of having offended your neighbour, you may yet be guilty of having neglected his conversion and eternal welfare. He who not merely abstains from injuring, but even forgives from the heart the injuries he receives, and endeavours to set the injurer right, either gains his brother, which is worth more than the world, or at least does his best to keep a good conscience, and delivers himself from a

heavy responsibility. Coals of fire are always within reach. Only let the flame of Christian charity glow in your bosom, and you will no more want opportunities of doing good to an enemy, than live coals could have been wanting upon the altar of the Old Testament, where the holy fire was kept perpetually burning. (Lev. vi. 12.)

O Thou God of patience, *how hard a task it is for corrupt nature to suffer evil and to do good, to receive cursing and to render blessing, and to kiss the hand which has given us the blow!* And yet Thy commandments are not grievous to those who love Thee. Pour into my heart one flame-drop of Thy love, and then never shall I lack coals of fire for those who have done me wrong.



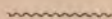
XXXIV.

THE DRINKING CUP.

FEBRUARY 3.

A SILVER cup, gilded and tastefully embossed, was standing upon a table, and suggested to *Gotthold* the following thoughts : The sole difference between

this and any other piece of silver is, that it has been more highly wrought, and beaten with the hammer. In no other way could it have been formed into the costly and beautiful vessel which we here see. Why then should we think it so strange and unaccountable when God, in His unerring wisdom, applies to us, in good earnest, the hammer of the Cross? Do not we deal as we please with the inanimate creatures, moulding them into any shape which strikes our fancy? And ought we, then, to take offence, and complain of Him, when He makes the Cross His hammer, and beats us into conformity to His will? Is our right over the creatures better than His over us? And would any good thing come out of us were our gracious Father to let us alone?



XXXV.

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.

FEBRUARY 4.

GOTTHOLD proceeded: Among the furniture of the tabernacle, under the Old Testament, not the least conspicuous article was the golden candlestick, with

seven branches and lamps that always burned. By the Divine command, however, this candlestick was neither cast nor soldered together, but made of beaten work from a talent of gold. (Ex. xxv. 31.) In this way the Lord intended to signify that no one can shine on earth with the light of sound doctrine and a holy life, or in heaven with eternal glory, who has not been subjected to His hammer, and beaten and wrought conformably to His mind. The only misfortune is, that we do not comprehend His method of working. Thy will, O God, is *to make of us vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for Thy use, and prepared unto every good work.* (2 Tim. ii. 21.) We, however, would rather continue good-for-nothing, than subject our sinful flesh to pain. But, O my Father, heed not our folly. The hammers Thou usest are the devil, the world, and all sorts of adversity. Beat well, that both here in time, and hereafter in eternity, I may be a vessel unto honour, and fit for Thy use.

XXXVI.

THE COUNTERS.

FEBRUARY 5.

GOTTHOLD one day saw a man of distinction reckoning with counters, and knowing that he sometimes trusted too much to his good luck, took the opportunity of saying to him : I see well that you, children of fortune, are in no want of preachers even out of the church, if you would but listen to their discourse. These counters picture forth the vanity of the world, and its incessant changes, in a way that charms me. One of them will sometimes be placed upon the lowest line, where it counts one, then upon the second, where it counts ten, anon upon the third, where it counts a hundred, and, again, upon the fourth, where it counts a thousand. Sometimes, however, it is taken off the board, and then goes for a mere counter worth nothing at all, although, perhaps, it was once the representative of a thousand ducats. And, of a piece with this,

is the lot of men. The hand of the Almighty assigns them their place, as He pleases or thinks right. At one time, they mount aloft and attain to honour, wealth, and fame, and then forget, as others likewise do, that they are human. But the King of Heaven soon sums up their lives, and, one by one, removes them from the board, and then they appear in their true light as mortal men, and mere counters, which had only passed for as much, and for that much only as long as He pleased. How true, then, the words of one of the pious fathers of the church: "Abolish foolish fancy and empty fame, and what are men but men?" The same thought was in David's mind, when he exclaimed: *How vain are all men though they live secure.* (Ps. xxxix. 5, Luther's version.) Let this be the theme of your meditations, and reckon it the best security of your prosperity, that you know how insecure it is. Make the instability of earthly things the foundation of all your plans. *He who thinks much of himself, is thought nothing of by God.*

XXXVII.

THE BEZOAR STONE.

FEBRUARY 6.

A BEZOAR STONE was shown to *Gotthold*, which led him to observe: There is in India an animal, partly resembling a stag, and partly a wild goat. It frequents mountainous districts, and feeds upon the best and choicest herbs. The bezoar stone is produced in its entrails, and, though small at first, increases in size as the animal advances in life. According to the testimony of physicians, this stone is a sovereign antidote to poison of every sort, and has restored many even when life was all but extinct.

Lord Jesus, Thou condescendest in Thy word to be likened to a wild roe and a young hart (Song of Solomon viii. 14); and it is in Thee that I find the true bezoar for my poor soul, poisoned and half dead with sin. Thou hast redeemed me from the grave. Thou hast said, O Death, I will be thy plague; O Grave, I will be thy destruction. (Hos.

xiii. 14.) By Thy grace my heart shall live for ever. (Ps. xxii. 26.)

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XXXVIII.

## THE COPY-LINE.

FEBRUARY 7.

GOTTHOLD observed a boy in a writing school, eyeing attentively the line placed before him as a copy, and labouring by his penmanship to emulate its correctness and beauty. Mark, said he to the bystanders, how all perfection is the offspring of imperfection, and how, by frequent mistakes, we learn to do well. It is not required of this boy that his writing shall equal that of the line. He satisfies his master by the pains he takes, and which are a ground of hope that he will progressively improve, till at last he learns to write with rapidity and elegance. We also have a pattern to copy. It has been left us by the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. ii. 21), and is His most perfect and holy life. And think not that He exacts from us more than the teacher does from the pupil. No, indeed; if He find us careful in studying His

example, and diligent in our endeavours to imitate it, He exercises forbearance towards our faults, and strengthens us by His grace and Spirit daily, to amend. In the school of Christ they are the best scholars who continue learning to the last; I mean they who sedulously keep their Master's example in view, and are always striving to grow more and more like it, but yet are never satisfied with themselves or with the progress which they make. We must, therefore, endeavour to avoid two faults, which are negligence and discouragement. The one becomes eventually the parent of indolence and security; the other of despondency and grief. Heaven is open, not merely to the perfect and strong, but, likewise, to the feeble and erring, if they will only with penitence and humility confess their faults, and seek in the grace of Christ the supply for all their wants.

O my God! despise not my inability. *Remember I am but a learner, and be satisfied with my poor performances.* My good intentions often miscarry. But ought I on that account to desist? God forbid! So long as I live, I will always begin afresh, and in heaven, at Thy good time, will lay my masterpiece at Thy feet.

## XXXIX.

## THE KEYS.

FEBRUARY 8.

A BUNCH of keys, which he saw on a table, in the house of a wealthy lady, led *Gotthold* to make the following reflections: As no one key can open all locks, so no one man possesses all talents. God distributes His gifts according to His holy will, this to one, and that to another; and none is sufficient for all emergencies, and independent of the help of others. Each, however, ought to endeavour to serve his neighbour according to the measure of the gift he has received. In this manner, the God of love has knit us all to one another by a bond of peace. I hope, Madam, *Gotthold* continued, that these keys are your own absolute property, and that there is not one in all the bunch which is at the disposal of—Satan. Remember that, according to the words of the apostle, if any one have this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up



his bowels of compassion from him, and refuses to open his coffers, then, unquestionably, the devil is the owner of the keys.

The best keys, however, are those which open heaven. In the year 1555, one of the blessed martyrs, shortly before his decease, spake these words: "Let us cheerfully tread the path before us, assured that death can never so prevail as to become to us an infamy and dishonour, but is rather an entrance into glory. Let us resolutely embrace and welcome it, seeing that it comes not armed with an *arrow* to wound us unto death eternal, but rather with a *key* to open the kingdom of heaven, and admit us to the vision of Jesus Christ, our only and everlasting life." I also know of a boy, only ten years of age, who once, at the suggestion, as I have no doubt, of the Holy Spirit, comforted his widowed mother in her sorrow and dejection, by observing, that God was a rich Gentleman, and had immense stores, that His pantries were full, and His supplies inexhaustible, but that the key to them was fervent prayer, and if we would but diligently use it, we should want for nothing. This, in fact, was just what the Saviour meant, when He said: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name He will give it you.*

And thus it is that prayer is one of the keys of heaven, and death the other. The latter, however, may easily be converted into the key of hell, and will certainly be so, if in this life we shamefully neglect to use the former, which, by Divine grace, is always at our command, and if we keep our temporal wealth too carefully locked up from our neighbour when he is in want.

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## XI.

### THE WEAK STOMACH.

FEBRUARY 9.

A pious man complained of pain in the stomach, and being asked the cause, replied: I was recently at an entertainment, where I was inopportunately pressed to eat, and, by so doing, exceeded my usual measure. The consequence is, that my stomach is angry, and seeks to revenge itself and punish me. *Gotthold* observed: Mark the emblem, which you have within yourself, of pious and conscientious men. They cannot bear the smallest excess. Not



merely do they heartily repugn actual sin, but sicken if they have been guilty of the least neglect. Their heart beats, their conscience stings and quails them, and they find no peace until, by true repentance, they are reconciled through Christ to God.



## XLI.

## THE TREES IN WINTER.

FEBRUARY 10.

GOTTHOLD proceeded : True believers have seasons of unfruitfulness, in which they bring forth no good works, or devout thoughts and aspirations. They are like the trees in winter which, although destitute of leaves, are not destitute of sap and life, and, therefore, when spring returns, bud, and blossom, and bear afresh. The ungodly, however, resemble withered trees, which at all seasons alike are without sap, and life, and fruit, and consequently are fit for nothing but the fire.

## XLII.

## THE MAGNET.

FEBRUARY 11.

GOTTHOLD further said : You may shake or push the magnetic needle from its position, but it returns to it the moment you leave it to itself. In like manner, believers may fall into sin, and deviate from the line of duty ; but no sooner have they leisure for reflection, than they endeavour to amend, and resume a life of godliness. On the contrary, the wicked watch for opportunities to do evil, and yield to all the temptations of the devil and the world.

## XLIII.

## THE SORE.

FEBRUARY 12.

GOTTHOLD went on to say : To good men sin and infirmity are festering sores, which give them pain, and from which they seek to be relieved. By the

ungodly, on the contrary, sin and infirmity are prized as a jewel, and regarded as a distinction and an ornament.

My God ! I beseech Thee, from my inmost heart, save me from the love of sin. May even the most venial faults give me pain. Daily admonish and correct me, whether by Thy Word and Spirit, or by a sincere and Christian friend, or by anxiety and heaviness of heart, or by the cross, or by whatever other means you please. When I sin, may I be instantly sensible of it, and heartily and humbly seek and obtain from Thee, pardon through Jesus Christ.



#### XLIV.

#### THE DOG BEFORE THE MIRROR.

FEBRUARY 13.

GOTTHOLD had a little dog, which, when placed before a mirror, became instantly enraged, and barked at its own image. He remarked on the occasion : In general, a mirror serves as an excitement to the love of self, whereas it stimulates this dog to anger.

The animal cannot conceive that the figure it sees is only the reflection of itself, but fancies it a strange dog, and therefore will not suffer it to approach its master. This may remind us of the weakness of our depraved hearts. We often complain of others, and take offence at the things they do against us, without reflecting that, for the most part, the blame lies with ourselves. Men behave ill to us, because we behave ill to them. Our children are froward, because they have inherited and learned frowardness from us. *We are angry with them, and yet they are our own image.*

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XLV.

THE MONK IN SOLITUDE.

FEBRUARY 14.

GOTTHOLD continued: I here recollect a pleasant story, told by a pious minister, about a monk of former days. He resolved to leave his monastery, on the ground that he there too frequently met with causes of provocation, and was betrayed into anger

and other sins. Accordingly he retired into the desert, in the hope that solitude would enable him to serve God with an easier mind. One day, however, his pitcher happened to be upset, and, when lifted up, fell a second time, which kindled his anger to such a pitch, that he dashed it to the ground, and broke it into a thousand pieces. He soon, however, came to himself, and said : I now see that I cannot be at peace, even in solitude, and that the fault lies not in others, but in myself. He then returned to the monastery, and, after many strenuous efforts, succeeded in subduing his passions, not by flight, but by mortification and self-denial.

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XLVI.

THE BOILING-POT.

FEBRUARY 15.

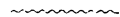
A POT stood upon the grate, and boiled with such violence, as to overflow and nearly extinguish the fire. *Gotthold* saw it, and said to his family : Mark there an emblem of proud and haughty men. Their riches,



ancestry, honours, and power, are live coals, which cause their hearts to boil and bubble with sensuality, contempt of others, and conceit of themselves, till their insolent prosperity at last injures and subverts itself. One is the possessor of great wealth ; but his heart boils with pleasure, and overflows in pomp and profusion, and these gradually impair his means, and reduce him at last from opulence to poverty. Another is of noble and illustrious extraction, and fancies that high birth consists in freedom to follow the evil inclinations of the heart, by which, however, he dims the lustre of his ancestors, so that they appear coals from which the heat has departed. A third enjoys the prince's favour and its usual fruits, honour, consequence, and power. But his mind cannot bear so hot a glow of fortune, and vents itself in crime, insolence, and reckless wickedness, which generally become the means of cooling his master's good will, and the consequence is, that all his prosperous state dies away. Imagine not, however, that the lessons to be learned from this pot concern some only and not all, or other men more than ourselves. All of us have hearts resembling it. Too great prosperity and success fill them with hot blood and overweening pride; and such a temper neither can nor will

endure anything at the hand of another, but expects that others shall endure everything from it. It is shown by a haughty gait, an insolent deportment, insulting language, pomp of dress, and wilful actions. No task is so hard as to bear prosperity and good fortune, with a humble mind.

My God ! I distrust myself ; great fortune might become to me a great misfortune. Thou often givest prosperity in anger, and adversity in love. Whatever Thou pleasest to give, O give me with it a heart to bear it according to Thy will.



## XLVII.

### THE WATCHMAKER.

FEBRUARY 16.

A FRIEND having remarked that he was often at a loss to discover any traces of the Divine government and providence in the affairs of the world, *Gotthold* said to him : Come, let us go to a watchmaker's. See, he has been making a valuable watch of a number of wheels, springs, pins, etc., exactly

measured, jointed, and fitted to each other. There lie the parts, all different in shape, size, and construction, and all having a certain order and place to which they belong. Do you think that you could put them together, and arrange them into one? I very much doubt your ability. Make the attempt; expend upon it as much time and trouble as you please, the only result will be to convince you of the impossibility of constructing a whole from parts so dissimilar. Call an artist, however, to the task, and you will soon see what skill can do. *It is the same here. God has ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.* He has adapted cause to cause, allotted to all His creatures their definite action, and finally, appended the weight of His omnipotence and wisdom to the whole fabric. Keep this in view when you wish to know what hour has struck.

My God! I thank Thee that Thy watchful eye is over all things, and that Thou governest them with mercy and wisdom. I thank Thee that the world goes not as man wills, but as Thou the Lord wilt. *In whom can I trust better than in Thee? How strangely soever, then, the world's affairs may sometimes seem to proceed, I will be dumb, and not open my mouth, because Thou doest it.*

## XLVIII.

## SILENCE.

FEBRUARY 17.

A pious man who had sat long in a company without taking part in the conversation, was asked why he was so silent? To this *Gotthold* replied: He might in turn as reasonably inquire of you, Why so talkative? Do you not think that quietness and silence are often preferable to much speaking? It ought to be a daily duty with us all to withdraw for a while from our worldly avocations, conversations, and enjoyments, and employ the time in prayer, and devout and calm reflection. It costs many a one much pains and money to learn the art of speaking: The Christian has enough to do, in the school of the Holy Spirit and the cross, to learn to hold his tongue. The royal prophet declares, *I will be dumb*, and not open my mouth, because Thou wilt do it well. (Ps. xxxix. 9, Luth. vers.) He resolved that he would never, either outwardly or inwardly, contravene the



holy purpose and will of God, but leave Him to execute them in his own way, and wait the issue with good hope. Oh! how difficult a task this is for our proud understanding, which would fain interfere and give advice; and how painful for flesh and blood to be silent when God's dealings with His people appear so contrary to all reason? Intending to make them good, He makes them desperate sinners; to make them wise, He makes them fools; to make them strong, weak; to quicken them into life, He casts them into the throat of death; and to exalt them to heaven, He plunges them into the abyss of hell.

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## XLIX.

HANS PRIEM.

FEBRUARY 18.

GOTTHOLD proceeded: Our worthy forefathers have left us a tale in verse, of which the purpose is to show how difficult, and yet how necessary it is sometimes to keep silence. The substance of the story is as follows:—

Hans Priem was admitted into paradise on the



express condition that he was not to indulge a habit he had acquired of censuring and criticising whatever came under his notice. Accordingly, he saw two angels carrying a beam crossways, and knocking it against every object they met, but said nothing. He next saw two other angels drawing water from a fountain, and pouring it into a cask which had holes in the bottom, and was much surprised, but still held his peace. At many other things of the same kind he also suppressed his laughter and remarks, apprehending that he might otherwise be expelled the place. At last, however, he saw a cart stuck fast in the mire, with one pair of horses yoked into it before, and another pair behind, and the carter urging both simultaneously forward. This being a matter which belonged to his own profession, it was more than Hans could do to refrain from criticising it, and the consequence was, that he was seized by two angels, and turned to the door. Before it closed behind him, however, he looked back, and perceived that the horses were winged, and had succeeded in drawing the cart out of the mud into the air; nor can there be any doubt that in the other cases of the beam and the cask, there were equally good reasons for what was done.

Wherefore, let us learn to hold our peace, and refrain from censuring the ways of God. But where am I running? In praising silence, I have become loquacious! My God! do Thou Thyself instruct me when to speak and when to hold my tongue.

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## L.

## THE CONVERTED DRUNKARD.

FEBRUARY 19.

A SET of profligate fellows had sat a whole day over their cups, carousing, cursing, and committing all sorts of wickedness. At length one of them could bear it no longer, and, slipping off, went to bed. When this was discovered, the rest resolved to have a frolic, and waken him from his slumbers. For this purpose, they disguised themselves, some in white shirts besmeared with blood, some in old sheep skins and sacks; they also blackened their faces, took flaming torches and drawn swords in their hands, and entering his chamber, surrounded his bed, and began to rouse him with horrible cries.

Opening his eyes, and seeing the figures, he fancied they were a troop of evil spirits, and was so dreadfully frightened, that he lost all power either of utterance or of motion. After keeping him for some time in this state of terror, the fellows called for liquor and glasses, and would fain have persuaded him to continue the carousal. But for this he had neither the ability nor inclination. In fact he was so seriously indisposed, that it was necessary to call in a physician, who for some time visited and prescribed for him. The Divine goodness, however, overruled for his advantage, the dangerous trick which had been played upon him. It induced him to make a vow that he would thenceforward, avoid bad company and tippling; and this vow he not only made, but was enabled faithfully to keep. The occurrence now related was but a jest, although one of a very cruel and dreadful kind, such as only men who were insane or intoxicated would have perpetrated. How easily, however, might it happen to a drunkard, in the retributive justice of God, to go to bed immersed in his sins, and in an impenitent and prayerless state, and so actually to undergo the very horrors which were here merely represented in mimic show; or, in other words, at the awaken-



ing of his soul to find himself in hell, surrounded by devils, and *receiving* from them *torment and sorrow*. (Rev. xviii. 7). Many are the instances of men who are overtaken when intoxicated or asleep by the righteous judgments of Heaven, and found in the morning dead.

Thou, my God, art merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. (Ex. xxxiv. 6.) In Thy great mercy, spare those who have miserably degraded themselves into slaves of wine and strong drink ; surprise them not with sudden death ; awaken them to a sense of their sin, and grant them for the sake of the Lord Jesus, heartily to repent, and, after repentance, to find mercy.



## LI.

## INFLATED HANDBALLS.

FEBRUARY 20.

GOTTHOLD looked on while some boys were playing with inflated balls, and said to himself: How well this game shadows forth the vain nature of the world! What but a handful of wind and vanity

are the objects for which men labour and toil, run and ride, strive and quarrel, lie and cheat, beat and persecute each other? They seek honour, wisdom, pleasure, wealth, and even when they find, are little the better for them, and not one step nearer their salvation. The wisest of monarchs confessed, as the result of his experience, that after having made to himself great works—builded houses, planted vineyards and gardens, dug pools of water, accumulated treasures, and not withheld from his heart any joy—mature reflection had shown him that all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and that there was no profit under the sun. (Eccl. ii. 4.) Will any one, however, attempt to surpass a prince so great, and wise, and wealthy, as Solomon, or expect to acquire a larger share of the glory of this world than he enjoyed? How great is man's self-conceit! How uplifted he is by the possession of a handful of wind more than others! And yet, what is he himself but a ball, which prosperity and adversity fling into each other's hand? The higher he is thrown, the deeper must be his fall; and after having been tossed about for a while, his brethren tire of him, and he is cast aside to lie and rot in the earth.



## LII.

## DANCING.

FEBRUARY 21.

GOTTHOLD was present at a marriage, and looked on while the guests amused themselves with dancing. He observed : Well was it said by a man of sagacity, that dancing was a sort of privileged and reputable folly, and that the best way to be convinced of this, was to close the ears and judge of it by the eyes alone. No doubt young people must be allowed to dance as a pleasing exercise of courtesy and good manners. At the same time, they ought not, while dancing, to forget the fear of God, and propriety, and decency of behaviour. Where wildness and disorder are visible in the dance, there Satan, death, and all kinds of mischief are likewise upon the floor. For this reason, I could wish that the *Dance of death* were painted on the walls of all ball-rooms, in order to warn the dancers, not by the levity of their deportment, to provoke the God of Righteousness to visit them with a sudden judgment.

## LIII.

## DANCING. (2D MED.)

FEBRUARY 22.

AFTER a while, *Gotthold* proceeded: We are told of one of the fathers of the desert, that seeing a female of loose morals arrayed in rich apparel, he was moved to tears, and lamented that he had never taken half so much pains to adorn his soul with faith and godliness, as she to please the world. And I, too, my God, could almost weep to think that I have been far less diligent to conform my walk and ways to Thy precepts and will, than these dancers are to make their feet keep time to the music. How infatuated are men! Mere vanities appear to us worth the greatest pains. But seldom and only with reluctance do we reflect upon eternity. Away with folly! *I have so much to do, to mend my heart and prepare for death, that I have no time to think of dancing.*

## LIV.

## GOING TO CHURCH.

FEBRUARY 23.

As *Gotthold's* family were setting out for church, See, said he to them, that none of you forget himself, and leave the true church at home. The true church is a devout heart, anxious both to learn and to do the will of God, and unless you take it along with you, you may as well stay at home. The pictures, pillars, seats, and benches, have been in the church for many a year, yet still continue lifeless things. You, however, are rational men, nay, more, baptized Christians; you have ears to hear, and a heart to understand God's Word, and unless you use your ears and hearts, going to church will do you no good. Nay, on the great day of judgment, there will be many for whom it would have been better never to have had the opportunity of entering a church door, than to have frequently gone to it, but just as often returned from it without fruit or im-

provement. On that day, it will be more tolerable for those who did not know the Word of God, than for those who possessed it abundantly, and heard it often, but did not act according to it. Must the fig-tree which, in its natural state, bore no fruit, be hewn down? Then, surely, much more that which, after all the pains of the husbandman, remains unprofitable still. (Luke xiii. 7-9.) After they had set out, *Gotthold* sighed, and said: Oh! Lord Jesus, beloved Saviour, there are many churches upon the earth, but few hearts that are churches to Thee. Here, however, is my heart; here the hearts of all my family; take, and occupy them; sanctify them by Thy Spirit; sprinkle them with Thy righteousness; drive from them Satan and all wickedness; fill them with Thy grace; protect them by Thy power; refresh them with Thy consolations; uphold them unto salvation by Thy strength, and so make them, both in time and eternity, Thy sanctuary and dwelling-place.



## LV.

## THE NATIVE CITY.

FEBRUARY 24.

AFTER an absence of above eleven years, during which he had been serving God and his neighbour, a hundred miles away, *Gotthold*, by the invitation of his friends, visited his native city, and seeing it situate on the level plain, thus spoke, with tears in his eyes: My God! this is the spot in which Thy goodness first embraced me; here was I first cast into the lap of Thy providence; here did Thy hand and care guard me in my cradle; here stands the baptismal font where Thou didst regenerate me by water and the Spirit, and adopt me into the number of Thy children. Here Thy grace walked always beside, and Thy mercy behind me, delivering me from the straits, and protecting me from the dangers into which, by the imprudence of youth, I was betrayed. Here Thy Divine forbearance patiently winked at, and mercifully forgave, the sins of my childhood.



Here Thou didst vouchsafe to me an honourable lineage, godly parents, faithful masters, pious ministers, and affectionate friends. Here sleep the bones of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters. Well, then, does it become me humbly to kneel and thank Thee for the mercies and the truth which Thou hast showed unto me, here and elsewhere, all the days of my life. My God, it delights me, after the lapse of many years, to see once more my earthly birthplace. But ah ! when all my years are past, and the pilgrimage of this troubled life has come to an end, how I shall exult to behold the heavenly Jerusalem, my true native country ! There Thy goodness will overshadow me for ever. There no sin will stain, no sorrow sadden, no danger alarm. There, in the society of Thy holy angels, of my beloved relatives and friends, and of all Thine elect, I shall rejoice before Thy face for ever. *Away, then, earthly fatherland ! vain world depart ! heaven and Jesus are better to me than thou and all things.*

## LVI.

## THE UNLUCKY GAMESTER.

FEBRUARY 25.

A MAN of a fiery temper had lost a considerable sum of money at a game with cards. His anger required a vent, and he discharged it upon the cards, tearing and cutting them to pieces, and treading them under foot. *Gotthold* saw this, and could scarcely restrain a smile as he thought with himself: In the same way we all refuse to take home the guilt of our misdeeds, and prefer devolving it upon others. This man's absurd and misdirected passion proves that his conscience convicts him of having done what justly deserves punishment; and if the inanimate instrument which is involuntarily subjected to the service of vanity, merit such severity, what must not he who employs it, expect? Moreover, if, on all occasions, we were to push our zeal against the instruments of sin to such a length, we should, like the heathen sage of whom we read, be obliged to cast our money

into the sea, break our glasses and other drinking vessels, pour our wine and beer upon the ground, cast off our best friends, tear our books, and tread our silks in the mud; inasmuch as all of these objects may, each in its own way, become the occasion of sinning.

My God! teach me that the fault is not out of me, but in me. All which Thou hast created, all which, by Thy impulse, or with Thy permission, the wit of man has devised, is good, or at least, if we make a good use of it, is certainly not evil. But things which are not evil in themselves our corrupt nature abuses and depraves. *For this reason, my zeal and severity shall be turned against myself.*

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## LVII.

### THE STAFF FOR A STEED.

FEBRUARY 26.

GOTTHOLD seeing a boy capering about with great glee and spirit upon a stick, and flourishing a little switch, said to himself: Alas! how happy an age is that of



simple childhood ! Can we, considering how much all temporal happiness depends upon the imagination, suppose that the knight who prances along upon his proud and mettled charger is really happier than this child ? Nay, does he not often carry such a weight of sins, and cares, and troubles, and debts, that it is a miracle the steed can bear both the rider and his burden. The child, however, capers and frolics about in his innocence, with no anxiety save where to feed his horse, and no debts but those of obedience and gratitude to his parents. We laugh at the little fellow for trotting and cantering along upon his own feet as if they were a borrowed steed. But proper reflection would show us that our own glory and pleasure are quite as ludicrous, especially in the eyes of one who having grown old under diverse crosses and afflictions, has learned to despise the vanities of the world, and seek the glory that remaineth. Many a man, when he recollects the sports of his childhood, can scarcely refrain from laughing. But hereafter, when he looks back from the life to come upon the folly of the world, he will find it difficult to determine whether it was in youth or in old age that he was the greatest child.

Lord Jesus, I here call to mind Thy words : *Verily*

*except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. xviii. 3.) Grant me grace to be simple and humble, sincere and kind, forgiving, chaste, and innocent as a child. It is better to be saved in child-like folly than condemned in foolish wisdom.

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LVIII.

CONSCIENCE.

FEBRUARY 27.

IN a business transaction, one of the parties showed such cupidity that he was admonished to pay some regard to his conscience, and to remember the Divine justice. To this, however, he boldly replied: What care I for conscience! In matters of this kind I have none, nor does God trouble Himself with trifles. *Gotthold*, on hearing the story, observed: The time is coming when he will startle with terror from his security. Conscience in ungodly men, so long as they rejoice in their sins and successful projects, is like fire in green wood; at first it can scarcely be



fanned into a flame, and seems ready to die away ; but let it once have gathered strength, and it rages with all the greater fury, and seizes and consumes everything around it. They resemble the wild hyæna, which shows great cunning in tracking its prey, and deceiving the shepherd and his dogs, but which is just as simple and stupid when required to protect itself. It lies silent and motionless when the hunter approaches its hole, and, imagining that it is not seen, allows him to fasten a cord to its foot. This he gently does, but has no sooner bound it to a tree, than he summons his comrades to put it to death, which, in spite of all its rage and attempts to escape, is soon done. The devil plays the part of this hunter to the ungodly. He always pipes to them in soft accents : Great is the Divine mercy ; there is no danger ; all will be forgiven. No sooner, however, has he bound them with his cords, and received the signal from God, than he changes his tone : Thou cursed fellow, he cries, thou despiser of the Most High, woe be to thy soul ! Thou hast been serving me, and shalt not want thy wages ! A selfish and fraudulent innkeeper speaks his guests fair, draws and serves his liquor fresh, places dice and cards upon the table, invites the company to amuse

themselves, and, meanwhile, says nothing of the reckoning. But it is not forgotten, and when at last laid before them, makes them stare. The devil does the same. Let us therefore be upon our guard against him, and especially against false peace of conscience. The soul is always in greatest danger when it will not believe that there is any danger to fear. The worst dogs are not those that bark and bite, but those that bite without barking.

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LIX.

THE BLUSHING CHILD.

FEBRUARY 28.

A YOUNG girl was one day censured by her mother for some fault, upon which she deeply blushed, burst into tears, and retired into a corner. *Gotthold* was present, and observed to the mother: How beautiful your reproof has made your daughter. That crimson hue, and those silvery tears, become her better than any ornament of gold and pearls. These may be hung on the neck of a wanton, but those are never

seen disconnected with moral purity. A full blown rose, besprinkled with the purest dew, is not so beautiful as this child blushing beneath her parent's displeasure, and shedding tears of sorrow for her fault. *A blush is the sign which nature hangs out to show where chastity and honour dwell.*

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LX.

MUTUAL AID.

FEBRUARY 29.

GOTTHOLD went on to say: How faithful to each other the parts of the body are! Let any offensive and shameful object be presented to the countenance, and the heart instantly sympathizes with it, and despatches a gush of blood to serve as a veil and to screen it from disgrace. On the contrary, let the heart receive a shock from violent anger, or sudden fright, and instantly the blood forsakes the countenance, and rushes to the help of the suffering member; the consequence of which is, that we grow pale. Christians ought to act in the same manner,

seeing that we are members one of another. In every case where the means are in our power, and conscience permits, we should endeavour to screen our neighbour's shame, take his affliction to heart, and hasten in emergencies to his aid. From the fact that this is so little done, it may be inferred that good Christians are few in number. Of that few, grant, O my Father, that I may be one!



## LXI.

## THE FUNERAL.

MARCH 1.

GOTTHOLD, while attending a funeral, at which there was the usual chanting and other music, reflected thus: Nothing could be better than the intentions with which our pious ancestors instituted these ceremonies. They are designed, however, less for the sake of the departed, who are above the need of earthly honours, than for the good of the survivors. The hymns are chanted upon the public street, and before the bier, in order that all who listen, as well



as all who sing, may be impressed more deeply with the fleeting nature of this temporal existence, and study to prepare for a peaceful death. In like manner, the tolling of the bells resounds through the city, to remind the inhabitants that one of their number has departed this life, and that their turn will soon come. Two by two we follow the bier, to intimate that the way to the grave is the way of all flesh, and must inevitably be trodden by us, when such is the will of the Most High; and though, no doubt, one pair in the procession walks nearer the bier than another, still the lot may light upon the last sooner than the first.

My God! at every burial of a departed fellow-Christian I will celebrate my own funeral obsequies; and listen to the psalms as if they were sung, and to the bells as if they were tolled, for myself. At all times, too, I will walk as if my feet were bearing me to the grave. In this, help me with Thy blessing, that so I may neither fear nor yet think lightly of death.



## LXII.

## LOSING THE WAY.

MARCH 2.

GOTTHOLD, accompanied by a friend, made a journey into the country, and the weather being cloudy, they were overtaken by a pitch-dark night. In spite of the gloom and mire their courage did not fail so long as they were sure of being in the right way. From this, however, they soon turned aside into one leading they knew not whither, and then their anxiety began, and was increased by the breaking-down of their carriage, which they were forced to repair as best they could. Every tree they saw, now seemed to them a tower, and every copse a cottage; and so they proceeded along, between fear and hope, until at length they reached a village. The adventure afterwards suggested to *Gotthold* the following reflections: On the journey of life our experience is often precisely similar to that of this evening. So long as a man keeps in the path of

his vocation, he never loses heart; because, whatever adversity befall—though the night of tribulation darken around, and he stumble from one slough into another—his thought still is: No matter! I am on the right way, and walk on it by the command of God; and to my wished-for destination it must infallibly bring me at last. With this persuasion, he stedfastly and patiently conquers all adversities. It is different with the man whose conscience tells him that he has presumptuously gone aside from the path of his vocation, and attempted either more or other things than those enjoined him by God. In that case, no sooner does he meet with a mishap, than he loses courage; his strength fails, and he becomes anxious, and alarmed, and doubtful of the issue to which his error may lead. At the same time, he generally reaches some place, or finds some leisure to repent of his folly, and implore help from God. Woe to him, then, if he neglect the opportunity! Wherefore, let us continue mindful of the admonition of the wise son of Sirach: "What is commanded thee, think thou thereupon, but be not curious in unnecessary matters."

## LXIII.

## RAIMENT.

MARCH 3.

ONE day, while walking with a friend, *Gotthold* met a young man dressed in the extreme of fashion, and could not help looking back at him, and exclaiming, with a sigh, O Righteous God, what will be the issue of this rage for novelties and vain show? How happens it that the world more and more seeks her honour in disgrace, and her wisdom in folly? I often think of what the Holy Spirit says (Acts xxv. 23) of Queen Bernice, viz., that she came "with great pomp" (*orig.* phantasy). The reigning fashion seems to me to be of the same *phantastic* character. There is hardly any one who now considers it a sin to wear a mask, and conform to the world. But, inquired his companion, can there really be so much sinfulness in the changes which dress undergoes? In itself, replied *Gotthold*, dress belongs to the class of things neutral. It makes a



man neither better nor worse in the sight of God, it draws upon him neither the Almighty's favour nor frown; still the coat shows what the man and what his heart is. Can you doubt, that many a one, in his gay attire, cut according to the newest style, is an idol to himself? With what pomp and pride he struts along, and fancies that none makes so fine a figure. Though one bow ever so soon or so humbly to him, yet he, on the contrary, scarcely deigns to return the salutation. In this way, the old man, whom we are bound to crucify with his affections and lusts (Gal. v. 24), is warmly clothed, expensively ornamented, and idolatrously revered. The money given to supply the wants of a needy brother, is wastefully squandered, and the word of God in the heart choked among thorns. He whose frame of mind is such, that he is always lying abased at the feet of the Omnipotent—he who does not despise a Christian neighbour, though in poverty and rags—he who is ready at any hour, in obedience to the will of God, to exchange the finest suit for the beggar's cloak, or the deathbed shroud, may, perhaps, without sin, wear costly raiment. But how the children of the world, with all their swelling pomp, shall contrive to enter in at the strait

gate which leadeth unto life, must be left for them to try, if they will have it so!

My God! naked came I into this world, and naked must I again depart out of it. While my life lasts, give me the food and raiment convenient for me. If my rank or office require a better dress, disengage, at least, my heart from it, and make me unconscious of what I wear. My soul desires ornaments of a different kind. *Let the blood and righteousness of Christ be my badge and robe of honour.*

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#### LXIV.

#### THE MILKY WAY.

MARCH 4.

ONE starry night, as he stood gazing at what is called the milky way, *Gotthold* thought with himself: This white belt in the heavens, as one of the ancients has said, and as has now been demonstrated, is formed by the shining of innumerable stars, too distant from us to be perceptible, except through the medium of the telescope. To me it presents, first of all, an emblem of holy Scripture, which to him who views it superficially, appears obscure and



dim ; whereas he who contemplates it in spirit, and through the perspective of faith, discovers a thousand sparkling stars of doctrine and consolation. Again, the milky way also reminds me of the glorious assembly of the saints in the life eternal. Of this, in our natural condition, we know nothing. But if we take the glass of faith and Divine contemplation, we then discover that verily *the spirits of the blessed shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.* (Dan. xii. 3.) And yet all about the heavenly world appears small and scarcely perceptible, because we are still at so great a distance from it. If, however, by the will of God, we one day reach that blessed place, then shall we fully know what it is, and be for ever satisfied.

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LXV.

ELECTION.

MARCH 5.

A PERSON, afflicted with melancholy, complained to *Gotthold* that he was often betrayed against his will into thinking of the decree of election, and that

when he considered how great is the number of the reprobate, and how small that of the elect, he could not help doubting whether he belonged to that few, and had a right to believe himself ordained to life eternal. *Gotthold* said to him in reply : It happens to you as to foolish children, who, from curiosity, or want of sense, frequently mount upon a ladder or stair, far higher than their heads can bear, and when they are up, know not how to descend again. I remember an instance of a child venturing out from a high window upon some boards, placed as a stand for flowers, and, in extreme danger, proceeding to his father's apartment, and looking in upon him at his studies. You are guilty of the same folly ; you venture into a dangerous place, climb too high, and wish to have a look into the council-chamber of the Most High. But, my friend, who bade you do this ? Reckon it for certain that these thoughts are but phantoms conjured up by the devil, and intended to plunge you into misery, spiritual danger, and continual despondency. What the Scripture says of the election of grace, it says not for the purpose of troubling and terrifying poor souls assailed by temptation, burdened with a sense of sin, and anxious to be delivered from it, but

rather for the purpose of soothing their distress. The very reason why God's only Son came down to us here on earth was, to save us from the necessity of soaring on the wings of dangerous thought to heaven, in order to learn there how God is disposed towards us, and what He has decreed respecting our salvation.

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LXVI.

THE RAINBOW.

MARCH 6.

As *Gotthold* was contemplating a beautiful rainbow, he reflected thus : Here, O my God, I see the token of the covenant which Thou in Thy mercy didst make with man after the flood. (Gen. ix. 12.) Yes, verily, Thou, *the Lord God*, art merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin ! (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.) Thou exhibitest the bow as an emblem of Thy power, but without string or arrow to show Thy grace. This signal of Thy compassion appears in the darkest rain clouds, to assure us that in wrath (Luth. Trans. *trouble*) Thou rememberest mercy. (Hab. iii. 2.)



## LXVII.

## THE RAINBOW. (2D MED.)

MARCH 7.

AFTER a pause, *Gotthold* continued: O Thou Lord and Sovereign of all worlds! Does not the rainbow show like the lofty portal of Thy celestial mansion? Happy I, for I know that the gate of mercy is never shut against a contrite sinner! This beautiful figure in the heavens takes its rise from the sun reflecting itself in the innumerable drops of falling rain; and even so in all Thy works do we mark the traces of Thine incomprehensible goodness. But as the rainbow forms only half a circle, so in this sphere of time Thou hast not, as yet, revealed the whole splendour of Thy benignity, but reserved the largest part for a blessed eternity. There at last shall we see Thee, O Thou God of Majesty and love, seated upon Thy glorious throne, and encompassed with the rainbow of Thy goodness, and be for ever blessed in Thy sight. (Rev. iv. 3.) Well then, my God,



I hereby promise, that while I breathe, the praise of Thy grace shall never depart from my heart and mouth. I will extol it while I live, for on it my life depends. *Thy loving-kindness is better than life,* (Ps. lxxiii. 3.) *Oh, give me but the assurance of Thy mercy, and I want no more.*

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LXVIII.

THE LARK.

MARCH 8.

It is a well-known fact, that about the time of the Feast of the Purification, when the weather is fair, the lark is the bird whose voice is first heard in the fields. *Gotthold*, listening to its notes at this early season, reflected thus: O my God! how this little bird, by the impulse of nature, exults in the hope that rude winter is now about to give place to the delightful spring! Ought not I, too, heartily to rejoice and praise Thee with my song, for the lively hope I entertain that the winter of this troubled life of time will soon be past, and that the summer of

our redemption, and entrance into celestial joy, draweth near? O Lord God! my soul exults, my heart leaps, my spirit rejoices at the thought of what Thou hast prepared for those that love Thee.

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LXIX.

THE FLIGHT OF WINTER.

MARCH 9.

GOTTHOLD proceeded: Here below believers have a rough and stormy winter to endure, for love has waxed cold in the hearts of men, and iniquity abounds. (Matt. xxiv. 12.) They are pressed and straitened with afflictions of every kind. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts. All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over them. (Ps. xlii. 7.) The world is a sheet of ice, on which they walk with continual danger, and all its possessions are like snow, which only serves to dazzle the eyes, and then melts and disappears. But in the better land, where Thou art present, O lovely and loving God, and where Thy paradise is ever fair and

green, they shall find summer at last. Ah, Lord Jesus ! in spirit I hear Thee whispering to my soul, *Rise up, my love, my fair one, for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth.* (Song of Sol. ii. 10-12.)

Lord God ! oh rend these visible heavens, that I may see the invisible. I have had enough of the shadows of this world ; let me gaze on Thy substantial glory ! Speed on, my life ! Ye ages roll away ! Pass by, ye years ! that I may at last reach the place where I shall see Jesus.

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## LXX.

### THE VIOLET.

MARCH 10.

GOTTHOLD having been presented with a bunch of blue violets, regaled himself with their delightful fragrance, and thanked God for the manifold kinds of refreshment which He provides for man. He also took occasion to express the following thoughts : This beautiful and odoriferous little flower may

furnish me with a pleasing image of a humble and godly heart. It is a lowly plant, and creeps upon the ground; but, nevertheless, it charms the eye with its celestial blue, and, by its noble perfume, far excels many of its more stately and pompous mates of the garden, such as the tulip and imperial crown. In the same way, there are persons who, to themselves and others, appear base and humble, but who resemble the Lord Jesus in meekness and lowliness of heart. They thus bear the genuine hue of heaven, and are preferred by God to others who parade their spiritual or bodily gifts. The apothecary, too, extracts the juice of this little flower, and, mixing it with melted sugar, produces a cooling and invigorating cordial; and even so the Most High infuses the syrup of His grace into the humble heart, and so makes it the means of comfort and edification to others.

My God! my glory shall be not to seek my own glory, but Thine. I have no wish to be a gaudy flower, if I can only please Thee, and profit my neighbour. *Greatness does not consist in the mere possession of lofty gifts, but in using lofty gifts with a humble mind, to the praise of the Most High.*



## LXXI.

## THE FRUIT TREES.

MARCH 11.

IN a company of friends, assembled in an orchard, the question arose, whether it was better to prune the under branches of the young trees, and so rear them straight and tall, or suffer them to extend in breadth? The majority were of opinion that the former was the preferable method, because the tall and straight tree occupies less space in the garden, and yet bears finer and more highly flavoured fruit. On the other hand, it was remarked, that such a tree, with the crop it bears, is at the mercy of the wind, which often prematurely shakes it, and scatters the fruit, long ere it is ripe, upon the ground. *Gotthold* heard the conversation, and said: The way to settle this dispute is to leave every one to do in the matter as he thinks best, and as is best adapted to the extent of his ground. Let me, however, embrace the opportunity of directing your minds to the question,

Whether, for the godly and virtuous man, it be more desirable to live in a humble rank, or to aspire after a higher position? It is true that he who is exalted above others by a post of honour, and who yet adorns his lofty boughs with fruits of godliness and virtue, while he also bends them with humility to the ground, is a tree in which both God and man delight, and whose fruit has the richer flavour the higher it grows. At the same time, it is a fact to be deplored, that a faint wind often agitates the lofty tree, by which, I mean, that the man of rank is exposed to many inducements to shake off the fruits of godliness, and is too often found a barren stock. On the other hand, serious defects are also prevalent among persons of a humble station,—as, for example, that they stretch the arms of greed and selfishness around them further than they ought, or in other ways, deport themselves in an unseemly manner, and thereby bring condemnation on their fruit. St Paul tells us this when he says: *As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk.* (1 Cor. vii. 17.) It is right that he whom God hath highly exalted should aspire after high things, and none are higher than those which are heavenly and divine. But let him whom the Most High has placed in a

low estate, comfort himself with the thought, that *Godly humility is the shortest way to true greatness*. All who are *filled with the fruits of righteousness unto his glory* (Phil. i. 11) are dear to God, whether they be high or low.

My God! make me, though a lowly, yet a fruitful tree. In this world I cannot reach my proper height; but when transplanted by Thee into Thy celestial garden, I shall flourish and grow for ever.

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## LXXII.

### THE ROYAL ENTRANCE.

MARCH 12.

It happened that a royal personage made his entrance into a town, with great pomp and solemnity, and that a friend of *Gotthold's* was heard to say on the occasion, that he wished he were a prince, to enjoy such splendour. To this *Gotthold* answered: You do not know what you wish. What is all this magnificence, the costly robes, the long guard in van and rear, the brilliant reception, but a specious disguise of the thousand hardships and cares which



burden royalty? A worthy Christian prince may have many servants around him, and yet he must himself be the servant of all his subjects. Others have their several offices and duties, but he is responsible for all. He must have a watchful eye, and wake when others sleep; an acute ear, to hear in a moment the complaints of the oppressed; an eloquent mouth, to decide justly in cases of dispute; and an active hand, to punish the guilty and redress the innocent. His head must be a fountain of grave and weighty thoughts for the benefit of his country, and his heart a repository of anxieties of every kind. As the summit of the lofty mountain is most exposed to frost and tempests, and frequently covered deep with snow, which, when melted, irrigates and fertilizes the valleys around, even so a prince is indeed exalted above others, but on that very account is peculiarly liable to adversities, and cumbered with burdens, which redound to the advantage and safety of his realm. He is like a taper, which ministers with its light to others, but consumes itself. In wishing to be a prince, therefore, you wish for a prince's burden, and a prince's troubles, and, what is worst of all, for a prince's responsibility at the judgment-seat of Christ.



My God! for my part, I have no desire to be anything but what Thou hast made me. I grudge not the great and mighty what Thou givest to them. Nay, I know not that I would exchange my poverty for their riches, my solitude for their attendance, my low degree for their lofty rank. One thing, however, I do implore. Let me reign over the sin that dwells in my nature. Teach me to govern myself, and grant that *I may one day be permitted humbly to enter the celestial city, welcomed by Thy holy angels, and wearing the crown of life.*

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LXXIII.

THE POTTER'S HOUSE.

MARCH 13.

As *Gotthold* was one day passing a pottery, in which all kinds of earthen vessels were arranged in different groups upon the floor, he thought of the command of the Lord to the prophet: *Arise, and go down to the potter's house; and there I will cause thee to hear My words* (Jer. xviii. 2), and proceeded to say to

himself: Alas, what are men but earthen vessels! Being all made of one clay, there is no difference among them, save that which the Master's hand creates, when He moulds them into diverse shapes, colours them more or less highly, and bakes them for a longer or shorter time in the fire. Even so we men, the great and the little, the poor and the rich, all spring from the earth, which is our common mother. Any measure of talent, honour, or wealth, which one may possess more than others, he owes to the bountiful hand of the Supreme Workman, and after all still continues a fragile vessel, and a mortal man; and if he think too highly of himself, must be taught that the King, whom God hath set upon His holy hill of Zion, still wields the iron sceptre, with which He can break and dash to pieces such gaudy potter's vessels. (Ps. ii. 6, 9.) Should another imagine that he has been defrauded of his due share of paint and talents, let him reflect that the Most High owed him nothing, and that the *potsherd cannot strive with the potter, nor the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou.* (Is. xlv. 9.)

My God, Thou art the potter, and we are the clay. What right have I to dictate what Thou shalt make, or how Thou shalt fashion and adorn me?

One thing, however, I do implore : Make me a vessel of Thy mercy, and an instrument of Thy compassion. Let Thy holy, just, and gracious will be accomplished with me, in me, and by me. Then shall I be satisfied, and desire no further ornament.

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## LXXIV.

## THE NOTE-BOOK.

MARCH 14.

GOTTHOLD one day purchased a few note-books, and took occasion to say to a friend who was with him : This reminds me of the words of a great and enlightened Statesman, who, being asked by a young gentleman what treatise on the art of government he could recommend as the best, replied : A book of white paper. Take such a book ; journey with it through the world ; carefully attend to every matter, whether political or not, which appears to you remarkable ; note it for the information of yourself and others, and in this way you will make an excellent work, from which you may learn much. The



sagacious man, it appears, preferred experience and observation to all other books. And why should not I entertain the same opinion on spiritual matters? I do believe that were a person, from his earliest infancy, to note and register all the Divine blessings, and all the miracles of goodness and severity which, in the course of his life, he observed and experienced, he would compose an excellent and most useful book. Nothing could be more edifying than to be reminded, by its perusal, how wonderfully, and yet how graciously we had been led, and how effectually comforted by God, and how various the ways, and abundant the measures, in which His fatherly love, truth, long-suffering, care, and goodness, had been manifested towards us! For my own part, were I circumstantially to record all the mercy which He has made to pass before me, the narrative would fill many volumes.

Well then, my God, I have learned from experience that my God Thou truly art. So numerous are the proofs I have had of Thy Fatherly care and faithfulness, that were I to fail in reliance upon Thee, it would be the height of injustice.



## LXXV.

## THE POST.

MARCH 15,

GOTTHOLD happening to receive a letter brought by the post in a very few days from a somewhat distant place, a person who was present observed: How useful an institution the post is, by which we are enabled in so short a time to hear from, and hold intercourse with, our distant friends. *Gotthold* replied: It is a just remark. The posts are now everywhere well-appointed, and there are few places not provided with them. But what edifying thoughts are they fitted to suggest? There can be little doubt that covetousness and curiosity are the two steeds by which most of the mails are drawn. Of that, however, I shall say no more. Let us rather reflect on something which the world in general forgets, viz., that we may, if we please, have a mail to heaven, conveying in a moment intelligence of our condition and concerns, our wants and desires to our God and

Father, and bringing back to us a gracious answer, with advice and comfort, protection and help. Blessed be the Father of Mercy, and the God of all consolation, who has not left us destitute of such a means of communication with Himself! Prayer is the swift courier, and sighs the winged messengers. Doves have been trained to fly from place to place, carrying letters in a little casket, fastened to their neck or foot. They are swift of flight, but our prayers and sighs are swifter, for they take but a moment to pass from earth to heaven, and bear the troubles of our heart to the heart of God. These messengers no hostile force can detain; they penetrate the clouds, never linger on the way, and never desist until the Most High attends. A tyrant may shut up a godly man in the deepest dungeon, immure him between massive walls, and forbid him all intercourse with his fellow-men, but these messengers he cannot restrain; in defiance of all obstacles, they report to the Omniscient the affliction of the victim, and bring back to him the Divine consolation.

O my Father, I thank Thee for having, despite the devil and the world, vouchsafed to us a channel of communication, and boldness to converse with

Thyself. Grant unto me that I may at all times use my privilege with filial reverence and confidence : And by such a post as this, viz., my last sigh, breathed by the strength of Thy Spirit in the name of Jesus, may my soul at length perform its journey from earth to heaven !

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LXXVI.

PSALM-SINGING.

MARCH 16.

As *Gotthold* was one day passing a tradesman's house, he heard the notes of a psalm, with which the family were concluding their morning meal. He was deeply affected, and, with a full heart, said to himself: O my God, how pleasing to my ears is the sound of Thy praise, and how comforting to my soul the thought that there are still a few who bless Thee for Thy goodness ! Alas, the great bulk of mankind have become brutalized, and resemble the swine, which in harvest gather and fatten upon the acorns beneath the oak, but show to the tree, which



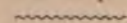
bore them no other thanks than rubbing off its bark, and tearing up the sod around it. In former times, it was the law in certain monasteries, that the chanting of the praise of God should know no interruption, and that one choir of monks should, at stated intervals, relieve another in the holy employment. To the superstition and trust in human works, of which there may have been here a mixture, we justly assign a place among the wood, hay, and stubble. (1 Cor. iii. 12.) At the same time, it is undeniably right that Thy praise should never cease; and were men to be silent, the very stones would cry out. We must begin eternal life here below, not only in our conscience, but also with our praise. Our soul ought to be like a flower, not merely receiving the gentle influence of heaven, but, in its turn, and as if in gratitude, exhaling also a sweet and pleasant perfume. It should be our desire, as it once was that of a pious man, that our hearts should melt and dissolve like incense in the fire of love, and yield the sweet fragrance of praise; or we should be like the holy martyr who professed himself willing to be consumed, if from his ashes a little flower might spring and blossom to the glory of God. We should be ready to give our very blood



to fertilize the garden of the Church, and render it more productive of the fruit of praise.

Well then, my God, I will praise and extol Thee with heart and mouth to the utmost of my power. Oh, that without the interruptions which eating, and drinking, and sleep require, I could apply myself to this my heavenly calling! Every mouthful of air which I inhale is mixed with the goodness which preserves my life; let every breath which I exhale, be mingled at least with a hearty desire for Thy honour and praise.

Hallelujah! ye holy angels, ye children of men, and all ye creatures, praise the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!



## LXXVII.

## THE BED OF FLOWERS.

MARCH 17.

GOTTHOLD ordered a parterre in his garden to be dressed afresh, and planted with all varieties of bulbs. The work, when finished, suggested to him

the following reflections : Although the gardener has exercised his skill upon this plot of ground, and given it a form, which adds greatly to its beauty, nevertheless, like other earth, it still retains the wildness of its nature, and unless carefully kept, would, ere long, be overgrown with weeds. It is the same with the heart of God's children. No doubt they have experienced a blessed regeneration, have become other men, and by the grace, word, and spirit of their heavenly Father, been transformed and renewed in heart. Still the innate sinfulness continues lurking within them, and must daily be kept under, by repentance and prayer, struggles and holy resolutions. They who are sincerely pious, do indeed forsake sin, but sin does not forsake them.

My God, I acknowledge all the grace, and pains, and labour which Thou hast expended on the cultivation of my poor and desert heart. I thank Thee for having traced upon it an outline of genuine godliness, and planted it with holy aspirations and desires, which are the roots of all the virtues. But, O my Father, Thou knowest the nature of the soil. Sins still harbour in my bosom ; and though, as Thou also knowest, I take pains to

extirpate and subdue them; the corrupt principle remains concealed in my flesh, is ever active, and breaks forth where it can. My God, my own care and pains are too slender and weak. Do Thou, therefore, take me and take my poor heart under Thy charge. Extirpate, subdue, restrain sin, and cause the flowers of faith and charity to grow, and increase within me, that my soul may become a garden of delight to Thee.

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LXXVIII.

THE FROGS.

MARCH 18.

ON the return of warm weather in spring, *Gotthold* heard the loud croaking of the frogs, and considered what reflections this was fitted to suggest. It occurred to him that they were an apt image of thirsty drunkards; for, just as frogs congregate in the pools and marshes, and seem to imagine that by their croaking, they emulate the nightingale, so do they who seek their enjoyment in drinking liquor, frequent the alehouses. In these, even on

the sacred day of rest, nay, on that day more than any other, a loud and mirthful life goes on. All is noise and tumult. Here one cries out at the utmost pitch of his voice, and there another. All talk, but all on different subjects, until, by constantly emptying and replenishing their glasses, they lose their wits, and no longer know what is Christian, or even what is human; for drunkenness robs its victim not only of his Christianity, but even of his humanity. This wilful and self-produced madness, is even called pleasure; and men seek their enjoyment in it. Well, then, ye drunkards, shout and riot in your sloughs and sins, but take heed that this does not plunge you at last into that lake which burns with fire and brimstone for ever.



## LXXIX.

THE FROGS. (2D MED.)

MARCH 19.

GOTTHOLD proceeded to say: Liars and slanderers also resemble frogs, for they often raise a mighty noise and outcry, about a pious and inoffensive



neighbour, when, by God's holy will and decree, he is made to sit in darkness. (Micah vii. 8.) Experience, however, shows that frogs stop their mouths and are silent, the moment they perceive a torch by night. And even so must liars hold their peace, when God brings forth the light of truth. But what ought we to do when assailed by false and calumnious tongues? We must just allow the frogs to croak, the serpents to hiss, and the dogs to bark. It is all they ever learned. Besides, malice, like other things, has its season. God at last will plead His people's cause, and bring them forth to the light, so that they shall delight themselves in His grace. (Micah vii. 9, Luther's version.) Shimei may rail and curse when the Lord bids him (2 Sam. xvi. 10), but, when the Lord bids him, he must also hold his peace, and confess his wickedness. (2 Sam. xix. 19, 20.)

My God, give me grace to abstain from every wicked act. For falsehoods and slanders, Thou canst easily find a remedy when the proper time arrives.

## LXXX.

## THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES.

MARCH 20.

IN a company of persons of rank, the conversation happening to turn upon the museum of a prince, several who had seen it, mentioned various objects, which, partly for the labour expended upon them, partly for their rarity, and partly, likewise, for their great intrinsic value, were held in high estimation. *Gotthold* remarked as follows: An eminent and pious clergyman, having once inspected a similar cabinet, interrogated his companions on their way out, which of all the costly objects it contained, seemed to them the most excellent and precious. With one accord, and consonant to the opinion of the keeper, who had shown them the cabinet, they fixed upon a piece of jewellery, in which were set many large Oriental diamonds. Whereupon, the clergyman observed: I perceive that you have yet to learn to put a just value on yourselves. Your

Saviour places the human soul in the balance with the world, and, after weighing them, pronounces the soul to be the more valuable of the two, saying, *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26.) There is not one object to be seen in this treasury, which was not purchased with gold or silver. The soul, however, is far too valuable to be bought at any such price, and, therefore, the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and blemish, required to be paid for it. (1 Pet. i. 18.) Besides, every object here is of a transitory nature, and subject to vanity. The soul, however, is immortal, and for that reason, ought justly to be prized, as the most precious of jewels.

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### LXXXI.

#### THE LOST OBJECT.

MARCH 21.

I BESEECH you, therefore, proceeded *Gotthold*, whatever else you may do, see that you keep with care the precious jewel of your immortal soul. In these

days of ours, means have been devised for searching and recovering lost things out of navigable rivers, and even the tempestuous sea ; but who knows how to rescue a lost soul from the abyss of hell ? Alas ! exclaimed one of the company, this jewel is far from safe, when entrusted to such care as ours ; and He who is the keeper of Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. cxxi. 4), must undertake the larger share of the task. To which *Gotthold* replied : How true that is !

Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Bishop of my soul ! Thou knowest best of any how much a soul is worth. Whatever it may be to man, a precious jewel it is to Thee, bought at an untold price. And that which is Thine own, Thou wilt know how to keep, that the devil may never steal it away.

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## LXXXII.

### THE SUN-DIAL.

MARCH 22.

GOTTHOLD, while inspecting the sun-dial, to ascertain if the clocks were right, said to himself : Dials are no doubt most ingenious contrivances, but however



ingenious, they are of no use when the sun does not shine. It is the same with us. Destitute of the grace of God, and of the quickening and enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, we, too, whatever be our natural gifts and talents, are good for nothing. The wise are not wise, and the most prudent counsellors go farthest wrong, when their understanding and judgment are not irradiated by the beams of grace from heaven. The acutest intellects fall into the most fatal errors, unless they humbly acknowledge their inability, and turn to the Sun of Righteousness, and seek to catch its rays. Nay, the most ingenious heads are like the finest watches, which, without constant inspection, are often the first to stop. What, then, must be the consequence of imagining that we know much, when all our knowledge, however great, is not only useless, but even hurtful, both to ourselves and others, unless we also humbly and devoutly imbibe the light of grace from heaven !

My God ! By Thy grace I am what I am. Let not Thy grace which has been given unto me, be given in vain. Cause the light of Thy countenance to shine upon me, that I may be able and willing to serve many.

## LXXXIII.

## FEEDING THE HENS.

MARCH 23.

A GENTLEMAN used to amuse himself by throwing crumbs of bread, and occasionally a handful of barley to his hens, from the parlour window. By this means they had not merely learned the custom of rushing to it the moment it opened, but likewise often stationed themselves beneath it, and signified by their cries, that they had a boon to beg. *Gotthold* saw this, and observed: Hens do to us as we do to God. He has often heard our cry, and given us the blessings we required for our spiritual and bodily nourishment, and has thereby, so to speak, habituated us to resort to Him on all occasions, and never to desist till we again receive His gifts; and this He does, although we are less profitable to Him than hens are to us. I have often wondered at the boldness shown by His children in their intercourse with Him, and not less at the loving-kindness and be-

nignity of so great a potentate, in not only bidding us pray, but declaring that He is well pleased when, in our prayers, we are not merely bold, but, if I may so say, shameless.

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LXXXIV.

THE IMPORTUNATE BEGGAR.

MARCH 24.

REFLECT, proceeded *Gotthold*, upon the language of the royal prophet : *Give ear to my words, O Lord ; consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God. (And why, then ?) For unto Thee will I pray. (Ps. v. 2.)* This is just as if a beggar were to knock rudely at our door, and then to say : Get up, for I am going to beg. In another passage, we read : “ Pour out your heart before Him ” (Ps. lxii. 8), and that is as if a beggar were to strip off his rags in the presence of a rich man, and exhibit his sores and deformities. In such a case, the rich man would no doubt avert his eyes, and take little pleasure in beholding the spectacle

of misery. The God of mercy, however, is not so sensitive. However great the care and wretchedness, sin and shame, we may have within our hearts, He bids us boldly pour it out before Him, that He may help us.

O Thou kind and loving God ! would that I could love Thee enough for all Thy love to me. Thou knowest how bold I am in my intercourse with Thee. Often have I said : If Thou refuse to help me, then show me at least some other God who will. And with Thine own words have I replied : *Is there a God beside me ; yea, there is no God.* (Is. xlv. 8.) Accept, therefore, my thanks for the privilege of speaking freely to Thee, and of expecting all things at Thy hand.

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LXXXV.

THE DEER.

MARCH 25.

GOTTHOLD one day saw a number of deer which a prince had ordered to be caught and enclosed in wooden cages, as a present, to be sent to a brother



monarch across the seas. It was remarkable that, however wild and shy these animals had formerly been, they now fearlessly ate barley, hay, cabbage, and everything of a similar sort, from the hand. *Gotthold* observing this, said to himself: O my God, how blessed is the yoke of the Cross, and how useful in making us good and meek! When man is exempt from affliction, when he is enjoying pleasure, health, and friends, then, he stalks through the world, like the wild stag through the forest, feeling no want, and caring as little for Thee as the stag does for me. The stag, when at large, flies from the sight of a human being, and will take nothing, be it ever so good and precious, from his hand. In the season of prosperity, we do the same; when Thy voice calleth, Where art thou, my children? we hide ourselves. (Gen. iii. 9.) When Thou wouldest entice us, we flee away. When Thou offerest Thy grace in the Word, we have no taste for it. Our soul loatheth Thy light bread (Num. xxi. 5), and we avoid Thee as an enemy. But as the huntsman waylays the stag in its security, and prostrates it with an unsuspected bullet; so never is our soul in greater danger than when we deem ourselves exposed to none.

Thanks be to Thee my God, that we are not left exposed to peril like this. Thou lettest loose upon us the persecutor and the slanderer. Thou entanglest and takest us captive in the meshes of all sorts of trouble. Thou enclosest us within the bars of poverty, sickness, and affliction, both of mind and body. Then do we begin to think of Thee, become humble and devout, acknowledge Thee as our God and Father, and eagerly accept the consolations presented by Thy gracious hand.



## LXXXVI.

## THE BEST CHAMBER.

MARCH 26.

INSPECTING a newly built house, *Gotthold* inquired of some friends who accompanied him, which of all the apartments they considered the best. One answered that he preferred the parlour, as being lofty in the ceiling, well-lighted, and capable of being easily warmed. The others severally fixed upon the kitchen, the cellar, the business office, and

the bed-rooms. *Gotthold* replied: No doubt these chambers will be the favourites of many. But what I meant to ask was, which of them a pious and godly Christian will prefer; and there can be no doubt that that is the chamber set apart as the place of prayer, and of which our Saviour says: *When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* (Matt. vi. 6.) That chamber is the sanctuary of the house. From it, as from a fountain, the stream of blessing flows, and is conducted into every corner. Over it the heavens are open. There stands the celestial ladder, upon which the angels of God ascend and descend. There man speaks with the Most High, as with a friend, pours out his heart before Him, confides to Him all his concerns, and obtains from Him, comfort in tribulation, and joy in the midst of sorrow. There stands the ark, for whose sake the whole family, like that of Obededom, is blessed. (2 Sam. vi. 11.) Happy he whose house has such a closet, well furnished, and well employed! The meanest hut, whose inmates abound in prayer, is preferable to the costliest palaces of those who despise God.



My God, my place of prayer shall be, wherever I can lift up a devout heart in faith to Thee. I, too, have a chamber appropriated to this holy duty. But I know that Thy goodness is confined to no particular spot, and, therefore, I can build myself an oratory anywhere.

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## LXXXVII.

## THE SAILORS.

MARCH 27.

ONE day, while walking upon the banks of a river, *Gotthold* beheld a party of sailors impelling their vessel against the stream. Sometimes fastening their ropes to a tree or post, they towed it forward; at other times, going ashore and harnessing themselves to the ropes, they dragged it after them. Here, said he, I have an emblem of my own voyage to heaven. The world is the mighty stream which sweeps multitudes away into the gulph of perdition. I must stem the torrent with my little bark, being commanded not to be conformed to the world, nor



to love either it or its lusts. (Rom. xii. 2 ; 1 John ii. 15.) For this purpose, labour is indispensable. My sighs and yearnings are the ropes, my resolution the post, and my strength is in God and His Spirit. Here I strain every nerve reaching forth unto those things which are before. (Phil. iii. 13.) Here there must be no pause or relaxation. Were these sailors to intermit their exertions, the stream would soon bear down their vessel to its starting-place. The same thing happens in our Christian experience. If we cease to fight with ourselves and the world, or relax our diligence in prayer, and other holy exercises, we soon become sensible of the backsliding and decline of our inner man.

My God, help me always resolutely to strive, and, through life and death, to force my way unto Thee.



### LXXXVIII.

#### THE STRAIGHT AND THE CROOKED TREE.

MARCH 28.

As *Gotthold* was one day walking in a wood with a friend, the latter spoke to him, with sorrow, of his son, who, he said, was a simple lad, could not be

taught manners, understood little of his tasks, and was too shy to speak to a stranger ; but yet, in other respects, was of a pious disposition, feared God, took pleasure in prayer, and was obedient to the slightest hint of his parents. *Gotthold* thereupon directed his attention to two trees,—the one beautiful and straight, and without a branch from the root to the top, which it had pushed high into the air, and spread out in a graceful circle ; the other, with plenty of branches, gnarled and crooked,—and then inquired : If you had the choice of these two trees, which of them would you prefer ? Without much reflection, his friend pointed to the straight one, and said : This would be useful for building, and various purposes, whereas the other is so crooked, warped, and knotty, that it is good for nothing. Attempting to manufacture anything out of it would be only wasting tools, and even to split or hew it into fuel for the fire, would be a difficult task. Well, said *Gott-**hold*, this straight tree is the emblem of a simple-minded, plain, and honest man, who grows up in unfeigned godliness, feeds his mind with heavenly thoughts, seeks those things that are above, and stretches forth his hands and heart towards God and heaven. Such persons are often chosen by the Most

High to be pillars in His temple. (Rev. iii. 12.) That other, however, is the proper image of a subtle, crafty, and intriguing person, who is full of tricks and cunning, knots and branches. Of what use is such a character, unless to trouble himself and others? If he who has little wit needs a master to inform his stupidity, he who has much frequently needs ten to keep in check his worldly wisdom, which might otherwise, like a high-mettled charger, toss him to the ground. It is better to have a son who is simple, good, and pious, than one self-willed, reckless, and sharp at all kinds of villany.

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LXXXIX.

THE PICTURE.

MARCH 29.

AN opulent man had taken down several fine paintings which adorned the walls of his house, cleaned off the dust with a whisk of feathers and a moist cloth, and then exposed them to the sun, knowing that this is the way to brighten paintings in oil,



and renew their original beauty and freshness ; whereas water-colour rubs off with the impurities. *Gotthold*, on being told the matter, observed : Like pictures in water-colours are false Christians, who possess the form of godliness, but deny the power (2 Tim. iii. 5), and may for a time deceive men, because men can see no farther than the outward appearance. They are known, however, to God, who tries the heart and the reins, and will be cast by Him into everlasting fire, as unworthy to enter heaven. As for true Christians, whose hearts have been thoroughly penetrated by the oil of the Gospel, and have taken their hue from the blood of Christ, they stand the proof, endure trial, and come more beautiful out of every temptation.

Grant, Lord Jesus, that my Christianity may be well founded and genuine, and that no accident may have power to blot Thine image from my heart !



## XC.

## EXALTATION.

MARCH 30.

A BEADLE having occasion to mount to a considerable height on a ladder for the purpose of examining the church spire, complained that the thought of his situation made him shudder, and that when he looked either to the earth below him, or to the clouds flying over his head, he was seized with giddiness, and was afraid of falling. *Gotthold* heard this, and thought with himself: We all attempt to climb aloft, and even when we have succeeded, find that we have only been climbing into danger. To him who has mounted as high as he can, nothing is left but to descend, perhaps to fall. Though unmolested by others, his own pride, the fatal giddiness of lofty heads, will bring him down. He, therefore, acts the most prudent part who, by humility, abases himself, and so prevents a fall. Exaltation, even in temporal matters, is full of danger. What wonder, then,

that in spiritual and holy exercises he should incur the greatest peril who has soared the highest and approached nearest to perfection, in so far as that is attainable, in this imperfect state. Were it not so, would Paul have needed sore temptations and messengers of Satan to keep him from being exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations given to him, and the arduous but successful discharge of his apostolic duties? (2 Cor. xii. 7.) This is the reason why the royal prophet says: By humbling me Thou hast made me great. (Ps. xviii. 35, Luth. vers.) He intends to tell us that no one can be truly great and exalted, and feel secure in the possession of his advantages, unless God exalt and confirm him by humiliation. The first step to perfection is to know ourselves and our nothingness; as the last and highest, is unconsciousness of our attainments. He who is high, and is aware of his height, has already begun to totter, and had better never have risen than have risen only to fall.

Protect me, O my God, from a proud heart and lofty looks, that I may never meddle with things too high or too great for me. *Better be a humble sinner than a haughty saint.*

## XCI.

## THE STEEL-YARD.

MARCH 31.

THE well-known instrument, called a steel-yard, has a beam marked with numbers, indicating the pounds. At the one end of this is a little plummet, moveable to and fro, as the weight requires, and at the other a handle for holding it, and a hook on which to hang the things to be weighed. *Gotthold* one day saw them using a balance of this description, and it suggested to him the following thoughts: This balance affords us no inapt similitude of the human mind, especially when it is sorrowful and dejected, and has the weight of some great cross attached to it. In that case the heart, however small, must act as a counterpoise to the load of cares, however great. But just as heavy burdens are most conveniently weighed on this balance, by moving the plummet to the opposite extremity of the beam; so the best way to vanquish the heaviest cares, is to separate the

heart, as far as possible, from them, and raise it to God, thereby casting our burden upon Him, and never doubting that He will care for us. It is, therefore, folly to suppose that we are taking the right method of weighing our crosses, when we bring our hearts near to them, and closely and minutely reflect upon them. The farther away the better. Room must be left for a gracious God to come between.

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## XCII.

### THE DRUNKEN MAN.

APRIL 1.

A DRUNKEN man came staggering across the street, having lost all command of either his head or his feet. The mud with which he was bedaubed, clearly shewed where he had been lying. Sometimes he shouted at the top of his voice ; sometimes stood still and wished to speak with those who passed, but his tongue was too heavy to utter an intelligible word. He reeled from side to side, and, in short,



was the sport of the children, and the laughing-stock of all. *Gotthold* saw him, and said: Now I understand how wise it was in the ancient Spartans to make a show of besotted and senseless slaves before their children, in order to inspire them with a disgust at drunkenness. What else is this man but an overloaded ship, whose sails have been torn by the tempest, its mast cast overboard, its rudder broken, and which is tossed about at the pleasure of the winds and waves, and in danger every moment of being dashed to pieces on the rocks? O drunkenness! thou art indeed the source of all that is vile and sinful! My God! protect me from it. Teach me to look upon all specious occasions of falling into it, as caresses of Satan, and to resist them with holy zeal. A social glass, enjoyed in Thy fear, as if under Thine eyes, and with a constant remembrance of Thy commandments, Thou dost not forbid me, if I only observe the Saviour's precept, and keep my heart from being overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. (Luke xxi. 34.)

## XCIII.

## THE LUTE.

APRIL 2.

ONE evening, one of a company of friends despatched a servant to his house, for his lute, and found that, when brought into the apartment, it had lost tune, as usually happens to these instruments, when exposed to changes of weather or atmosphere. While the owner was tightening the strings, *Gotthold*, who was present, thought with himself: What is sweeter than a well-tuned lute, and what more delightful than a faithful friend—one who can cheer us in sorrow, with wise and affectionate discourse! Nothing, however, is sooner untuned than a lute; and nothing is more fickle than human friendship. The tone of the one changes with the weather, that of the other with fortune. With a clear sky, a bright sun, and a gentle breeze, you will have friends in plenty; but let fortune frown, and the firmament be overcast,

and then your friends will prove like the strings of this lute, of which you will tighten ten before you find one that will bear the tension and keep the pitch.

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XCIV.

THE LUTE (2D MED.)

APRIL 3.

AFTER a pause, *Gotthold* proceeded: But why complain of others, when I find a match for the lute within myself? What is my mind, if not an instrument easily put out of tune? In fair weather it rings loud and clear; I mean that when caressed by fortune, it is haughty and insolent, enamoured of self, and prone to fancy that all it thinks and contrives, is good and pleasing both to God and man. Only, however, let the weather change, and the sun of prosperity dim its beams, and hide behind dark clouds of trouble, and then our courage vanishes, we give ourselves up to despondency, and anxious thoughts make a strange medley within us.

Yes, my God, my mind is indeed variable as a

lute, and good for nothing, unless from hour to hour Thou tunest it afresh. Enable me in all weathers decreed for me by Thy providence, to keep the pitch, and may that ever be, *Thy will be done.*

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XCV.

THE MOLE.

APRIL 4.

GOTTHOLD one day looked on while a gardener watched a mole, caught it at its mischievous work, threw it with his spade out of the earth, and made it pay with its life for the damage it had done. This creature's whole employment, thought he then with himself, is to plough up the well-dressed gardens and fields, gnaw and destroy the roots of plants, and by the many heaps it forms, to disfigure and injure the parterres and meadows; all which it does for the sake of its food. Able to see and cater for itself in the dark, and even beneath the earth, it is blind when unexpectedly brought into the light. And so it is with the man of the world. He burrows and filches in secret; seeks his own



advantage at the expense of others, who wither and perish through his devices, and raises on every hand the monuments of his enmity and selfishness. Besides, wise and crafty though he be in temporal things, he knows absolutely nothing of those that are spiritual and divine. But death stands by, and only waits the nod of the Most High, to terminate, in a moment, his projects and intrigues, casts the miserable man out of earth, into earth; I mean, from all his temporal possessions, into the grave. To that dark abode he shall carry nothing away, nor shall his glory descend after him; but having loved darkness rather than the light in this present life, he shall never see the light of the life to come. (Ps. xlix. 18, 19.)

Thou faithful God, what would it profit me to live in this world, were I to shut my eyes to the light of heaven! It were better to be a mole, and after death, have neither good nor evil to expect, than an ungodly man appointed to the place of everlasting darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## XCVI.

## THE SHADOW.

APRIL 5.

IN going one day southward, from his garden to his house, and turning his face, as the path obliged him to do, to the sun, *Gotthold* observed that he was followed by his shadow, and reflecting upon it, said to himself: A shadow like this, which sometimes stalks before us, sometimes marches at our side, and sometimes follows us behind, is an emblem of human honour. For example, many a one obtains honour before he has earned it. His lineage, power, wealth, the fickle favour of the people, give him a consequence greater than his deserts; the shadow is larger than the body which follows it. Many a one is the companion of his honour, and enjoys a well-merited fame, but only at one side, because there are always some who delight to pare the edges from the best deserved reputation, as the Jews do from coins of gold. In fine, there are

others who march with unflinching heart towards the light of virtue, and who are followed by the shadow of a reputation which they have long deserved. This shadow, however, only becomes visible, when envy expires with their life.

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XCVII.

THE SHADOW (2D MED.).

APRIL 6.

GOTTHOLD proceeded : Hypocrites also walk towards the sun. I mean, they assimilate their outward deportment to that of the children of light, talk volubly of the truth, contend for it with zeal, and wear so well the outward semblance of godliness, that it is difficult to discover any difference between them and those who are godly indeed. There is, however, this discriminating mark, that often, when unobserved, they turn to survey their shadow. The chief object with them, is vain honour with the world. They love the sun for the shadow it makes them cast ; or, in other words, profess piety for the conse-

quences which they expect to reap from it in the eyes of men. Let the sun, however, be concealed behind a cloud, so that the shadow disappears, and you will soon find them seeking, I know not where, some other luminary. On such characters, He who will judge the quick and the dead, has pronounced sentence : *They have their reward.* (Matt. vi. 2.)

Jesus, my Lord, thou Sun of Righteousness, to Thee my spirit directs its course in faith and love. The flesh, no doubt, finds it hard to refrain from looking back at the shadow. But Thou wilt sometimes pardon the folly, until we reach the place where *shadows will flee away.* (Cant. ii. 17.)



## XCVIII.

### THE YOUNG LAMB.

APRIL 7.

ONE evening, *Gotthold* met a shepherd walking behind his flock, and carrying in his arms a lamb, that had just been dropped in the field. The sight at once reminded him of the good Shepherd, Jesus



Christ, and he thought of Isaiah's prediction concerning Him (Is. xl. 11): *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.* He then exclaimed: Far be it from me to imagine for a moment, that this shepherd is more attentive and affectionate to his flock, than the Lord Jesus to the Church, which He has purchased with His own blood. No; Thou faithful Shepherd! Didst Thou not carry the weak and tender lambs, and watch continually over them; didst Thou not seek that which is lost; bring again that which is driven away, and bind up that which is broken, Thou wouldst soon have no flock at all.

My Saviour! we are sheep and lambs, shy and timid, silly, weak, and helpless creatures, but Thou art a faithful Shepherd, and seest, knowest, and art able to do all things for us. Indeed, wert Thou to withhold Thy care, who could save us from destruction? Lift up, then, my weary soul, O Shepherd, and carry it in Thy arms. Let Thine eye be over me, that I fall not behind in the way, and for this I will thank and praise Thee through eternity.

## XCIX.

## THE SOARING LARK.

APRIL 8.

THE lark is distinguished from all other birds, by the habit that, when about to sing, it does not seat itself upon the branch of a tree, or in a thorny bush, but soars in successive pitches, ever higher and higher, into the air, as if the longer it sang, the more desirous it grew to reach the heavens, and meant, in this way, to show in whose honour it pours forth its notes. *Gotthold*, one day, as he looked and listened with delight to the little warbler, thought with himself: Well did my Saviour say: *Behold the fowls of the air.* (Matt. vi. 26.) How beautifully this lark indicates to me the true method of prayer and praise to God! Observation shows that it has its almost stated morning and evening hours for mounting from the earth, and chanting its little hymn to the praise of the Creator; and ought I, who receive from that Creator blessings a thousand-fold greater than any bird, to be less diligent in this holy duty! God

forbid! I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth (Ps. xxxiv. 2); and although I do occasionally feel that the glow of devotion languishes in my bosom, yet I see, in this lark, and know from experience, that there is no better means of fanning it into a flame, than the desire and effort to pray. The higher our spirit soars above the earth, the nearer it approaches heaven, and it cannot be but that that which approaches heaven shall be filled with heavenly wisdom, and that that shall imbibe light which aspires to the light eternal. *Lord, when I cry unto Thee, then know I that God is for me.* (Ps. lvi. 10. Luth. vers.)

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C.

THE HEN.

APRIL 9.

It is well known to be the habit of the hen, that when it has laid an egg, it announces the fact to its owner by loud cackling. On hearing this noise one



day, *Gotthold* thought with himself: This hen acts as proud saints and hypocrites do. Such characters make a trade of godliness, and have no sooner, with only half their heart, performed a good work, than they are eager to have it everywhere trumpeted, and made known to their honour. True Christians are of quite another mind.

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CI.

THE EYE THAT DOES NOT SEE ITSELF.

APRIL 10.

GOTTHOLD proceeded: The eye, the noblest member of the human body, does not see itself; and piety and godliness resemble it, in being destitute of self-consciousness. Believers do not believe that they believe. The humble are ignorant of their own humility. The best and most devout suppliants have their minds so full of God, that they are not aware, and never think of the fervour of their prayers. The kindest benefactors have no recollection of the good they do, and are surprised when



men thank them for it. The pious fancy that they have no piety, and consequently are always fighting, striving, and exercising themselves to attain it, in which, indeed, growth in godliness consists.

My God ! never have I greater reason for suspicion than when I am particularly pleased with myself, my faith, my prayers, and my alms.

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## CII.

### THE ROSEMARY PLANT.

APRIL 11.

GOTTHOLD one day found a worthy lady occupied in her garden. She was cultivating, with great care, some plants of rosemary, and had placed beside them a broken pot, filled with water, and furnished with a woollen rag, which it was designed should gradually imbibe the moisture, and convey it to the flowers. Having inquired of her if, during her labours, she also exercised her mind with profitable thoughts, he received the following answer : Yes, I try to recollect that as this noble plant of rosemary is a sort of

stranger in our land, and requires to be carefully tended and screened from the influences of the frost and heat, or it will neither thrive nor grow, even so I myself, as a believing and baptized Christian, am a native of heaven, and a stranger in the world, and if I do not wither and die among the many inclemencies of this painful life, the grace of my God must be my defence from the heat of the cross, and my refreshment in all tribulation.

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### CIII.

#### THE ROSEMARY PLANT (2D MED.).

APRIL 12.

GOTTHOLD then said : This plant, and the pains you take to cultivate it, may further remind you how to treat the Word of God. You will admit that any one text of pith and moment which the Bible contains, is finer, better, and more profitable than all the rosemaries in the world. For this reason, plant such texts abundantly in the garden of your heart and memory ; water and bedew them with holy

meditation, devout yearnings and tears ; and, in order that they may grow and flourish, extirpate all the weeds of worldly and carnal thought, which would otherwise choke the seedlings of the Word and the sprouts of heaven. These will then thrive, and on some future day, and in a better world, may furnish an unfading garland for your brow.

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CIV.

THE SERPENT.

APRIL 13.

GOTTHOLD one day took his son with him into the garden. As the little boy was there running about, he spied a snake, instantly turned pale, began to scream with terror, and ran to his father. After a few soothing words, *Gotthold* addressed him thus : Never, my child, forget the saying of the wise son of Sirach, *Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent, for if thou comest near to it, it will bite thee.* Sin is the envenomed sting with which the old Serpent, the Devil, slays the souls of men. The serpent at which you



are so much alarmed is a timid creature, flies from the sight of you, and may be put to death with a slender staff. But the infernal serpent secretly tracks your steps wherever you go, defies all human power, and is too cruel to be satiated with less than the soul's eternal ruin. Walk, therefore, at all times circumspectly. Be diligent in prayer. Always carry about with you, in your hand and heart, the staff of the Divine Word, which alone can drive the serpent away. Protect yourself with the antidote of the blood of Jesus Christ. Above all, avoid opportunities of sinning, and beware of bad company. Whoever neglects these rules is already sporting with the serpent, and will not escape without a poisonous and fatal wound. Be cautious whom you trust, *and if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.* (Prov. i. 10.) The pleasures of the world, luxurious living, the company of the giddy, immoderate fondness for dress, are the bushes and thorns beneath which sin and Satan lurk ; and yet, alas ! they are the things in which men generally delight. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.* (1 Tim. vi. 11, 12.)



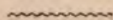
## CV.

## THE EARTHEN CLOD.

APRIL 14.

ON an excursion into the country, *Gotthold*, observing the clods upon the rich ploughed fields, said to his companions : I recollect having read of an old nobleman, who, every morning when he rose, had a fresh lump of earth brought to him, and for a while inhaled the scent of it, considering this an efficacious means of preserving his health and lengthening his days. I wish that not only all noblemen, but all emperors, kings, princes, and lords, and, indeed, all Christians, observed the same custom. Whatever it might do to their bodies, it would infallibly promote the health of their souls, by reminding them of their mortality and nothingness. Let man parade, and boast himself as he will, he is nothing but a clod of earth, which the hand of God will very soon bruise and crumble into dust and ashes. There have been many famous monarchs in the world, great in name, power, and achievement: they now ?

Search the tombs of the mightiest emperors,—of Alexander, Charlemagne, and Otho,—and think you that you will find in them anything but a handful of earth? It is the same with ourselves. All the great pains we have taken; our cares, toils, honours, and erudition, terminate at last in an earthen clod. For this reason, the wise man, when he beholds us vapouring with all the pomp of the frog in the moon-beam, cannot refrain from mocking us, and asks: *Why is earth and ashes proud? Man is filthy while he liveth, and when he is dead, creeping beasts and worms devour him.* O that we always remembered this!



## CVI.

## THE SLEEPING CHILD.

APRIL 15.

A LITTLE girl had fallen asleep at her play; and, sunk in deep repose, was lying in the court of *Gotthold's* house. On seeing her, he thought with himself: How happy are thy days! How sweet thy repose; how calm thy rest! Thou slumberest upon the earth

more soundly than many a miser and worldling upon his bed of down. And the reason is, that thou hast a gracious God, and an easy conscience. Thou art a stranger to all care, and awakenest only to resume thy play, or ask for food to satisfy thy hunger.

My God ! why is not this also the case with me ? The fault is not Thine. Thy grace and fatherly care are exercised over me as well as over this child. It ought, therefore, to be my pastime to perform, with alacrity and reliance upon Thee, the duties of my station, and afterwards to repose tranquilly upon my bed, leaving care and wakefulness to Him who is the keeper of Israel. I have myself to blame. I often want to be no longer a child, but a man of wisdom in Thy sight ; I want to share Thy cares and counsels ; I want to help Thee to govern the world and the Church ; I want to secure, by my own ways and devices, the prosperity of myself and my family, and the consequence is, that peace forsakes my mind, and often also my body, and I cannot find upon a bed of down what this girl enjoys upon the hard earth. I will therefore take her for my school-mistress ; I will not be ashamed to learn from her, trust, simple-mindedness, sincerity, meekness,



contentment, and along with these, the way to sleep soundly and calmly, which is a Christian art, and a gift of God.

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CVII.

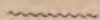
THE RICHEST PRINCE.

APRIL 16.

GOTTHOLD proceeded : This reminds me of the noble Duke Aberhard of Würtemberg, who, being present at a colloquy in which several German princes extolled each the glory of his realm,—one boasting of his excellent vineyards, another of his hunting-grounds, and a third of his mines,—at last took up the word, and said : I own that I am a poor prince, and can vie with none of you in these respects. Nevertheless, I too possess a noble jewel in my dominions ; for were I to be without attendants, and to lose my way, either in the open country or wild forest, I could ask the first of my subjects whom I met to stretch himself upon the ground, and confidently place my head upon his bosom, and fall



asleep without the slightest apprehension of injury. Was not this, indeed, a precious jewel for a prince? I, however, have something better, for I can rest my head and heart in the lap of God, my heavenly Father, and upon the bosom of Jesus Christ, my Lord, with the perfect assurance that neither the world nor the devil can touch me.



## CVIII.

## THE CLOUT.

APRIL 17.

GOTTHOLD was one day grieved and disconcerted at an unchristian, uncharitable, and calumnious judgment, expressed by some one upon an action which he had performed with the best intentions, and on the justest grounds; for flesh and blood are not always ready to wear Christ's crown of thorns, with the same pleasure as they would a garland of flowers. Immersed in cogitation, he walked from room to room of his house, when all at once his eye lighted upon a clout, which lay at the door, for wiping the

feet. This brought to his recollection the holy monk, Henry Suso, of whom it is related, that one day, while sitting deeply dejected in his cell, on account of certain slanderous reports which had been circulated concerning him, he observed a dog in the cloisters dragging about a foot-cloth, sometimes tossing it into the air, and sometimes dashing it on the ground. "Verily," sighed the monk, "in the mouths of my brethren I am like this foot-cloth;" and, pursuing the train of meditation, he added, after a pause: "This foot-cloth submits to be treated according to the good pleasure of the dog, and whether it be cast into the air, or dashed upon the ground, and trampled under foot, patiently endures it. And I must learn to do the same. Let them, then, despise and insult, deride and spit upon me, I will meekly bear it all." He thereupon took possession of the clout, kept it as a jewel in his cell, and for many years, when he needed spiritual strength, contemplated it with his inward as well as outward eye, and never without profit.

*Gotthold* added: I too would gladly have kept the old clout, and learned from it the same lesson of patient submission. No good comes from acting otherwise. We must resign ourselves to God's holy

decree and will, and allow Him to deal with us in His own way. What though He gives us up for a time into the hands of the world, and suffers it to sport with us as the dog does with the clout! Who can hinder Him? Would He not have a perfect right to deliver us even into the hands of Satan? Do we not know that the world cannot worry us, either longer or more than the Lord, in His wise and fatherly counsel, permits? Well, then, to-day this clout shall be my book. I will learn to resign myself to God's will, nay, at His will, even to the will of mine enemies. All things shall be alike to me, be they lofty, or be they low; favour and affliction; honour and disgrace; whichever accords with Thy most sweet and holy pleasure. Come on, world; toss me too and fro, up and down, on the bench or under it, into the light or into the dark corner; to me it is the same. Toss me where thou wilt, there will my God find, and thence will He one day draw me forth. To be rejected by the world is easy to bear, if we are not rejected by Him. But I will be dumb, and not open my mouth, for Thou wilt do it. (Ps. xxxix. 9.)



## CIX.

## THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN.

APRIL 18.

SOME children in the neighbourhood had collected a number of bulbs and plants which a wealthy proprietor had cast out, as useless or superfluous, from his parterres. With these they planted a vacant plot of ground, surrounded it with a fence of branches, and were immensely pleased with the pleasure garden which they had thus laid out, talking as mightily about it, as if it had been an affair of state, and labouring till the perspiration flowed from their brows. *Gotthold* happening to pass with a friend, beheld, with pleasure, the delight of the children, and observed: What, then, is the great difference between the toils of age, and the toils of youth? Children plant gardens, build houses, pay money, celebrate marriages, give entertainments, elect emperors and kings, magistrates, ministers and schoolmasters, generals and captains,



wage war, and conclude peace, and all with the utmost zeal and pains, until they wear themselves out, and hunger and thirst drive them home. And what more do we who are old? They have at least as much enjoyment in their sport as we in our earnest. Our pleasure is often mingled with great displeasure; our honours are burdensome, and our buildings heaps of sorrow. They lose their time, and so do we. Their labours have little permanence, and ours not much. Saving the exercise of their powers, they reap little profit from their pains, and we none that is solid or lasting. They fancy their employments of great importance, while we regard them as but the sports of children; just as we suppose we have weighty enterprises on hand, and are supporting the world upon our shoulders, while the Lord is laughing at our folly. They imagine themselves possessed of great wealth, if they have stuffed their little purses with counters, or money made of old cards or broken pottery; but, when they offer their coin for biscuits to the baker, learn with sorrow, that it is worth nothing. In like manner, we, too, dream that the possession of some hundreds or thousands of pieces of gold makes us great and mighty men, and entitles us to universal

respect ; whereas, when we appear with them at the gate of heaven, we shall be told that they are filth, and nothing more. It thus appears that life on earth is child's play, for the old not less than for the young ; unless, indeed, we attain to the blessedness of the new birth, grow to the stature of men in Christ Jesus, put away childish things (1 Cor. xiii. 11), and set our affections upon objects worthy the efforts of a soul which is the offspring of God, and destined for immortality.

Mark here another emblem : These children have taken care not to leave their flowers without a fence. As little ought we to suffer our hearts, when planted by the Spirit of God with holy thoughts and good resolutions, to remain unprotected. Well has it been said by a devout author, "Turn your back upon foolish and fleshly lusts, the moment you feel them stirring within you. Flee for refuge to your Saviour's cross, and let His thorny crown be a fence around your heart, and protect it from the little foxes (Cant. ii. 15), which are sinful lusts."

Lord Jesus, do Thou Thyself surround my heart with a fence. It will then be securely protected.

## CX.

## THE GOLD COIN.

APRIL 19.

GOTTHOLD was once shown a large and very rare gold coin, which, he observed, was estimated at a high rate by its owner—I do not say its master—for the owners are not always the masters of their money. Having asked its value, he was told that it was worth thirty dollars and more, and then rejoined: Yes, certainly, more; for such objects derive their whole worth from human fancy, and this remark applies not merely to the coin, but to the metal of which it is made. *Pomponius Mela* and *Tertullian* mention a nation called the *Macrobians*, who made golden chains and fetters for their malefactors—an excellent device, as the latter of these authors remarks, for curing those infected with the lust of gold. And what, then, is gold? It is a glittering, yellow-coloured kind of earth, the same as that of which man himself is formed. It is perishable, and subject to vanity, lifeless, and

intrinsically of no peculiar virtue. Can it allay the troubles of the heart, or sooth the pang of dissolution? Has it any power to rescue, comfort, or preserve the soul? It comes from dark recesses (deep subterranean mines)—and into dark recesses (purses and chests) it also goes, and it lures many into the darkness of hell. It is a deep disgrace to Christians to be so enamoured of it as we are !

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CXI.

THE GOD OF EUROPEANS.

APRIL 20.

GOTTHOLD continued: *Las Casas* relates a very remarkable history: An Indian, called *Hatury*, had made his escape from the cruelty of the Spaniards upon the island of *Hispaniola*, to *Cuba*. Suspecting that even there he was not safe from their pursuit, he convoked his countrymen, and addressed them thus: “Gold is the god of these foreigners, and here beside me is a chest of it. Come let us perform a dance in honour of this god; who knows but it may avert his wrath, and induce him to com-



mand his worshippers, the white men, to leave us in peace." Accordingly, they commenced dancing around the chest which contained the fancied deity of the Spaniards, and did not desist until their breath failed. At last they sunk the chest in a neighbouring stream, afraid that it might not be safe to keep such a god among them. And now, ask yourselves, whether these poor Indians were altogether wrong, and whether there are not many Christians who do love gold as their chief good, and rely infinitely more upon the idol, than upon God. But, I am well aware, the world laughs at me, and fancies I am so simple as not to know the use of money. Begone, then, O world, and take with thee thy gold. I will keep my God!

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CXII.

## FRAILTIES.

APRIL 21.

A good man was complaining of his many frailties. I am, he said, like a child, who this moment gives, and the next takes back the gift. In my intentions,

I give liberally to my God, but I soon reclaim all that I have given. When He alarms or corrects me, I make Him plenty of promises, but, alas ! they are soon forgotten, and seldom kept. Hereupon his eyes filled with tears. Well, said *Gotthold*, if it be true that you are like a child, it is also true that God likens Himself to a father who pitieth his children. (Ps. ciii. 13.) For my part, I never either saw or heard of a father, who, for a few faults or shortcomings, drove his child from his home, drowned him in the river, or cast him into the fire. Without patience, and a large measure of pity on a father's part, it is impossible to train a child and rear him to manhood ; and unless God overlook many faults, and exercise great compassion towards us, not one of us will ever enter heaven. Or, do we men, who are evil, suppose that we can possibly be more patient than the gracious and long-suffering God ? The moon, even at the brightest, is not without spots ; and just as little is the Christian without sins, even at his best. It is true he has forsaken his sins, but his sins have not forsaken him. Recollect that you are under the eye and discipline of a good and gracious God, who knoweth our frame, and whose wisdom and good-

ness shine most conspicuously in the fatherly long-suffering and forbearance with which He treats the frailties of His saints, and renders even these subservient to their welfare. Above all, however, forget not to look to the crucified Jesus, and His sacred blood and merits. You are not the man to stand before God in your own strength ; Christ must be in you, and you in Christ.

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CXIII.

THE CHILD AND THE PIG.

APRIL 22.

GOTTHOLD proceeded : Do you know the reason why God tolerates within us, and leaves us to struggle daily with the remains of corruption ? His object, no doubt, is to endear to us Jesus and His cross and blood, and to impel us to seek Him with greater zeal, and cleave to Him with greater stedfastness. Let, then, your frailties and evil thoughts make you humble, but let them not dispirit and overwhelm you with doubts. Wipe them off if you have re-



ceived the grace of tears ; but reflect also, that the wounds of Jesus distil blood which cleanses from all sin. Fight daily with your frailties ; and in the strength of Jesus Christ, do your utmost to keep them down. *You* may sometimes fall and be overcome, but never *Christ*. Oh, said the person whom he addressed, this is indeed a great comfort, were it not abused by the ungodly and secure ! *Gotthold* replied : Between godly men and the godless and secure, there is in this case the same difference as between the child, who, from thoughtlessness or want of strength, falls into the mud, but instantly cries for help, and the moment he is rescued, flies to his mother, and with tears implores to be washed,—and the pig, which stretches itself in the slough, with delight and good will, and seeks in it coolness and pleasure. What right has the pig to plead the example of the child, or an impenitent and secure sinner, that of an erring but praying and pious child of God ?



## CXIV.

## THE WRANGLERS.

APRIL 23.

Two persons in a company had quarrelled, and used harsh language towards each other. But, at the prudent instigation of friends, one of them took his departure, and left the other to curse, bluster, and revile, alone. For this, however, he was afterwards sorry, supposing that it might be interpreted as cowardice, and that his opponent might be tempted, by the impunity with which he had escaped, to repeat his insults. *Gotthold* having heard the case, said to him : Tell me, Friend, were you climbing a hill, and were a great stone or block to be rolled down towards you, would you consider it disgraceful to step aside and allow it to rush past ? If not, what disgrace can there be in avoiding and giving way to a man instigated by drink or anger, until he has had time for reflection, and his agitated mind finds rest in repentance ? He who breaks his will and yields, is ascending ; he who gives the rein to his passions, is falling.

## CXV.

## SUBSIDED MUD.

APRIL 24.

IN a vessel filled with muddy water, the thickness visibly subsided to the bottom, and left the water purer and purer, until at last it seemed perfectly limpid. The slightest motion, however, brought the sediment again to the top, and the water became thick and turbid as before. Here, said *Gotthold*, when he saw it, we have an emblem of the human heart. The heart is full of the mud of sinful lusts and carnal desires, and the consequence is, that no pure water—that is, good and holy thoughts—can flow from it. It is, in truth, a miry pit and slough of sin, in which all sorts of ugly reptiles are bred and crawl. Many a one, however, is deceived by it, and never imagines his heart half so wicked as it really is, because sometimes its lusts are at rest, and sink, as it were, to the bottom. On such occasions his thoughts are apparently devout and holy, his desires pure and temperate, his words charitable and edify-

ing, and his works useful and Christian. But this lasts only so long as he is not moved ; I mean so long as he is without opportunity or incitement to sin. Let that occur, and worldly lusts rise so thick, that his whole thoughts, words, and works, show no trace of anything but slime and impurity. One is meek as long as he is not thwarted ; cross him, and he is like powder, ignited by the smallest spark, and blazing up with a loud report and destructive effect. Another is temperate so long as he has no jovial companions ; a third chaste while the eyes of men are upon him.

Alas, my God ! How often have I fancied that the world and all its lusts were a thousand miles away, and yet afterwards discovered that, like a crafty foe, she had kept quiet only to attack and beguile me unawares. Often in my communings with Thee, I have vowed that I would be courteous and friendly to the man by whom I had been injured, and would show it by my deportment. Nay, if required at the time, I would have confirmed my vows with any number of oaths ; and yet I have afterwards found that the very sight of him so violently stirred and agitated my heart, that nothing was visible in it but the mire of enmity.



O, my God! Purge me, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. *Create in me a clean heart.* (Ps. li. 10.)

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## CXVI.

## THE SPOILT PEN.

APRIL 25.

A LADY of rank having occasion to write a letter, took up a pen, which she found unfit for the purpose, and attempted to mend. In this operation, however, she happened to blot the paper, which provoked her to such a pitch, that she struck the pen with violence upon the table, and spoilt it. *Gotthold* witnessed the scene, and said, with a smile: Nothing is more common in life than to find people acting in this manner. They cast away, break, and destroy their instruments, when these do not serve them agreeably to their wishes. By this, however, they only show how just and right it would be in the Supreme Author of all good things, intending, as He does, that we should be the instruments of His grace and will; but finding us unprofitable, and even obstinate



and refractory, were He to reject us in His wrath, and dash us in pieces in His hot displeasure. Why should that be wrong in Him, which seems to be right in us? But He is God and not man, and so great and tender is His mercy, that He does not execute the fierceness of His wrath, nor turn to destroy us utterly. (Hos. xi. 8, 9.)

Thou God of Mercy, I can form no better conception of Thy long-suffering, than by surveying my own brief life, and marking the rich display of it towards myself. But when I figure the vast multitude of unbelievers who daily and hourly offend Thee, but, nevertheless, continually desire, and continually enjoy, Thy goodness, my soul sinks as in a deep ocean, and all I mourn for is, that there is one who does not love Thee, who art love itself.

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## CXVII.

### THE EVENING SHADOW.

APRIL 26.

WHILE taking his evening walk, *Gotthold* perceived that the shadows, as usual at that time of day, stretched to a vast extent, and that his own equalled

in length a tall tree. He thereupon said to himself: Even though I did not see the glorious sun hastening to set, the shadow might tell me that night was not far away. The same is the case in human life. When vain ostentation—the shade cast by magnificence and pride—swells and increases, the welfare of a family is hastening to its downfall. When the shadow of titles and compliments is exorbitantly stretched, candour and familiarity fall asleep. From the fact that all the world fancy themselves greater than they are, and measure themselves by the shadow which they receive from the flattery of others, and that this vain life, and its vile lusts, which are but fleeting shadows, are loved and esteemed infinitely above their worth, I draw the conclusion that night is at hand.

Lord Jesus ! the sun, it is true, is about to set, but for aught I know, this may also be the appointed hour for Thee to rise, and usher in the last and never-ending day. Come, Lord Jesus. Heaven and earth are weary with waiting for Thee, and so are Thy faithful saints. O, come ; terminate the reign of vanity, and conduct us to the everlasting rest.

## CXVIII.

## THE LISTENER.

APRIL 27.

A PERSON complained that, while he was conversing confidently with a friend, a third party, of whom they had no suspicion, had been lurking and listening in a corner, and by reporting the conversation, had created great dispeace. *Gotthold* remarked: Eaves-droppers and listeners, it is true, are dangerous characters, and the great mischief they do may be seen in the instance of Doeg, the blood-thirsty flatterer of King Saul (1 Sam. xxi. 7, xxii. 9), whose treachery caused the death of fourscore and five priests, with their wives and children. But tell me how came you to be so imprudent in your talk. *Do you not know that it would often be better to loose a pearl from a necklace, than a word from the tongue.* So long as you keep an important word to yourself, it is your own. Utter it, and from that moment it belongs to all by whom it has been heard; and you need not wonder that



they treat it as their property, adding to or taking from it, extending or extenuating it, according to their pleasure. The only way to prevent this, is to be silent, and to keep in your words.

One thing more. You say that you were conversing confidentially with a friend, and did not observe the listener. But remember the advice of the wise monarch : *Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought ; and curse not (speak not evil of) the rich in thy bed-chamber, for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.* (Eccles. x. 20.) In future, therefore, be not so rash with thy mouth. Forget not that there is a listener always on the watch, who hears, sees, and knows all that we say, do, or think, whether in secret by ourselves, or confidentially with others. I speak of conscience, which never sleeps, and holds a Divine commission to report upon our whole conduct. Tell me, would you freely and unreservedly utter all that enters your mind, were you aware that one of the company was treasuring, and would afterwards commit it to writing ? Scarcely. Why, then, are you not afraid of your conscience, which records everything you do, and will one day upbraid you with more, perhaps, than you will like to hear ?



*My God, put a lock upon my mouth, and affix a seal to my lips, that I may never transgress by foolish talking.*

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CXIX.

THE CIRCLES ON THE WATER.

APRIL 28.

GOTTHOLD one day saw a boy standing upon the bank of a lake, and casting pebbles into its smooth and tranquil water. The effect was, as usual, that each, as it fell, produced a number of circles upon the surface, which were small at first, but became gradually wider and wider, until at last they disappeared from the view. Here, said he to himself, I have a pleasing emblem of my inquisitive mind, when it applies its reflection to the calm and deep ocean of divine truth. If I begin seriously to ponder the wondrous dealings and holy purposes of my God, I always see one divine benefit and proof of wisdom appearing behind another ; or if I have searched, in some measure, one little circle of His ways, I perceive

a thousand others, all widening as they recede, which at last fill me with awe, so that I stop and exclaim :  
*O, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. (Rom. xi. 33.) Many, O Lord, my God, are Thy wonderful works, which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts to usward. They cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*



## CXX.

## THE SLATER.

APRIL 29.

IN a well-known town, a slater had to mount a spire, and repair some injury done by the wind. Having reached the top, he stood upright upon the ball, held in his hand a jug of wine, and filling a glass, drank to the health of several of the dignitaries of the place. *Gotthold* was among the crowd who gazed at him with wonder and apprehension, and remarked : We

are amazed at the fearlessness with which this man can stand, and speak, and drink, in a position so manifestly dangerous, that we shudder to think of it. Tell me, however, which of all the spectators standing here upon the level ground, is really more secure of his life for another moment. A breath of wind, the smallest slip, a momentary giddiness, would tumble him down from yonder pinnacle. But experience shows that any of us might be as unexpectedly dismissed from the world by an unforeseen fall or shot, or sudden sickness, such as apoplexy. Of this I know many instances. A preacher standing in the pulpit, and introducing a young colleague into his office, was himself suddenly ushered by death into eternity. A celebrated physician was present at the marriage of an orphan girl, who had asked him to represent her father on the occasion. While dancing the first measure with the bride, as the custom of the place required him to do, death unexpectedly called him as a partner to the floor, and rushed with him out of the world. A barber, employed as assistant at a nobleman's funeral, was shovelling the earth upon the coffin, when he fell in and instantly expired, so that he actually helped to fill his own grave. Cases of the kind are by no

means rare, but meet with no attention. We stand upon the brink of eternity, and eat, and drink, and are secure !

My God ! it is true I do not know how, or when, or where death shall, at Thy command, terminate my life. But I know that it will not fail to come. *Let this, therefore, be now, and at all times, my contract in faith with Thee, that to Thee I live, and to Thee I die, and that whether living or dead, I am now and for ever Thine.*



## CXXI.

## THE VILLAGES.

APRIL 30.

STANDING on the top of a hill, *Gotthold* could see a considerable extent of level country, and count a number of the surrounding villages, which he recognised by their church spires. He thereupon sighed, and thought with himself : O Thou omniscient God, here I stand upon an eminence, and can number many villages ; but all I see of them is but a project-



ing signal, indicating where people dwell. Who, and how many these are, what they are doing, where they sit, or whither they go, I neither see nor know. But Thou dwellest on high, and humblest Thyself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth. (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6.) Thou seest and numberest the cities, towns, and villages of the whole earth, surveyest their inhabitants, knowest what they think, hearest what they say, and observest what they do. And, doubtless, O merciful God! not a few dost Thou behold whose hearts are faithful and devout, whose eyes are towards Thee, and who are walking in Thy fear. But who can conceive the amount of wickedness, knavery, plotting, infamy, and vice, which Thy holy eye must see even among Thy Christian people? And yet Thou art merciful to all, and winkest at the sins, that the sinners may amend. But woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us, and who knoweth us. (Isa. xxix. 15.) Let me never more forget the words of the wise son of Sirach: *The eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun*, and behold all the ways of men, and consider the most secret parts.

## CXXII.

## THE TRANSPLANTED LIME.

MAY 1.

AN afflicted man complained that in the passage of a hostile army through the country, he had lost his all—his house having been plundered and burnt to ashes, and he himself driven from it with nothing but the staff in his hand. *Gotthold*, heartily sympathising with him, spoke, for his comfort, as follows : Be of good cheer ; we have a God who can make us happy even in adversity. He then pointed to a young lime, which had shortly before been removed from the open field, and planted for ornament and shade in front of his house, and said : Mark that tree. By my command it was lately planted there. Its boughs have all been lopped, the stock polled, and now it stands disfigured and without a leaf. But no other treatment would have done it good. Had the branches been spared, the roots, so recently disturbed, and, as yet, imperfectly estab-

lished in the foreign soil, could not have supplied them with sap, and, as an inevitable consequence, both they and the stock must have died. There, however, the stock now stands, naked indeed, but still alive, and distributing whatever sap it receives from below, into a few little buds, which, by degrees, will burst, and grow, and flourish. In the same way does a faithful God often deal with those Christians whom He intends to transplant from the soil of the world into the kingdom of His Son. He suffers them to be reduced to poverty and want, causes the boughs of their temporal prosperity to be hewn off by robbery, injustice, war, or conflagrations, in order that they may serve Him with a readier will; and with lighter burdens and fewer impediments, proceed along the narrow way that leadeth unto life. If you have lost your all, count yourself happy that in this respect, you have attained to conformity with your Saviour, who had not even so much as where to lay His head. (Matt. viii. 20.) At His birth, His bed was a manger, but it was not His own. He taught the people from a ship, but that was Simon Peter's. Into the city of Jerusalem He rode upon an ass, but it was borrowed for the purpose. The little clothing which



He possessed, the soldiers divided among them, and cast lots for His seamless coat. The only thing He could call His own, was the cross on which He shed His precious blood. Be thankful, therefore, that although you have lost all else, you have still a cross which you can take up and bear in the footsteps of your Master Jesus.



## CXXIII.

## THE PLANT IN THE CELLAR.

MAY 2.

HAVING occasion to go into the cellar, *Gotthold*, found a turnip, which had been left by accident, and had vegetated and sent forth long and slender shoots. These, however, were unnaturally of a pale yellow colour, and, therefore, unfit for use. Here, thought he, I have the type of a human undertaking from which God withholds His blessing, and which must, therefore, necessarily miscarry. This plant wants sunshine and open air, without which it cannot thrive, and so it grows in weakness for a



little, and then withers and dies. It is the same with all our acts and enterprises, which are not irradiated by the grace of God, nor fostered by His blessing. According to the words of the Saviour, *Every plant which my Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* (Matt. xv. 13.)

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## CXXIV.

## THE PLANT IN THE CELLAR (2D MED.).

MAY 3.

AFTER a while *Gotthold* proceeded: The turnip vegetating in the cellar, is no less the emblem of the man without practical experience and skill. In some obscure corner he has laboured to acquire learning, and with it has acquired also a high opinion of his attainments, so that he fancies that, with his self-taught wisdom, he is qualified to govern, and prosperously direct the affairs, not only of a city, or a church, but even of half the globe. When he comes, however, to apply his hand, he cannot find in his whole satchel, skill enough to execute with

success the most trifling plan, and he learns that it is one thing to know, and quite another thing to apply knowledge to the management of those who possess it too.

The same mistake is often made in the matter of religion. We imagine our faith, our charity, our patience, to be of the most luxuriant growth, although, perhaps, they are of the sickliest kind. *Experience makes able men—the cross good Christians.* This plant was never shone on by the sun, nor moistened by the dew, nor watered with the rain, nor shaken by the wind, nor hardened by the cold, and, therefore, it is good for nothing. In like manner, the Christian, as yet not tried by prosperity and adversity, favour and affliction, must be considered unripe. Beautifully does the great and much-afflicted apostle say: *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.* (Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.)

## CXXV.

## THE BOOK WITH THE PAGES MISPLACED.

MAY 4.

WHILE reading a newly bound book, *Gotthold*, in passing from one page to another, found that the connection of the sense was broken, and, on closer examination, discovered that the binder had, by negligent folding, misplaced some of the leaves. Well, said he, all is correct and beautiful, both upon this page and upon that, but as they do not follow in proper order, an incongruity arises which offends the mind. The same may frequently be observed in the suggestions and remarks of many a man with whom we converse. In themselves, they may be just and true, but as the speaker does not understand how to introduce them at the proper time, they are as distasteful to hear as this book is to read. It is no better with the thoughts which we utter in the presence of God. To the head of a family, engaged in prayer, something will sug-

gest itself as useful for his household, and requisite to be done; or to a monarch, some plan on which he had previously long but vainly cogitated; or to a preacher, the commencement, division, or embellishments suited to the several heads of his discourse. Now, although none of these things are intrinsically wrong, still they are, in the circumstances, incongruous and inopportune, and grievously diminish the fervency of prayer. The lips may afterwards speak on, but the heart is all the while listening to a whisperer, and knows not what they say, and God chooses to know as little. Cabbage is a useful kitchen vegetable, but when it springs in the same bed, and vies in the luxuriance of its growth, with the rosemaries and tulips, it is properly regarded as a weed, uprooted and planted elsewhere. Let us do the same thing with the wandering thoughts which, during prayer, intrude into the heart, and divert it from its work.

Lord God! help me to worship Thee in spirit and in truth; and when I am about to pray, may Thy grace firmly bar the closet of my heart, that nothing may intrude to impair the fervour of my devotion.



## CXXVI.

## THE DEW.

MAY 5.

ONE morning, at break of day, *Gotthold* sallied forth into the country, and gazed with rapture on the rising sun. It reminded him of the Sun of Righteousness, whose rise and appearing on the last great day of judgment was the object of his fondest aspirations, and he exclaimed: Thou blessed day of the revelation of the children of God, commencement of the everlasting rest—when wilt thou dawn? Proceeding a little way, he perceived that his feet were drenched with dew, and that not one blade of grass or leaf of plant but was tipped with pearls, and all besprinkled with silver drops. Alas! said he, I was seeking profitable entertainment for my thoughts on the distant verge of heaven, and yet I have never properly understood the divine goodness with which the earth is full. Now, however, I can say with truth, *that I wash my steps with butter* (Job xxix. 6),

*and that thy grace is like the morning dew.* (Hos. vi. 4, Luth. vers.)

Yes, Lord, thy mercies are innumerable as these glittering pearls. Thou hast bespangled all creation with the dew of Thy goodness. Eternal praise be to Thy name ! My Lord and my God ! shed also upon my poor heart and conscience, a drop of Thy celestial grace, that I may become ready and zealous for Thy service.



## CXXVII.

## THE ROSE.

MAY 6.

A PERSON beholding, in the month of May, the pomp and beauty of the roses, remarked : This is the flower which the Holy Spirit Himself has selected as the emblem of the believing soul, because, as the rose is environed with thorns, so likewise is such a soul with tribulation. *Gotthold* replied : You say well, and no doubt you have also sometimes experienced the thorns which wound and vex the Christian's heart. We are told that the fragrance of the rose is

greatly increased by planting a bunch of foetid garlic beside it. If this be true, it serves to illustrate the benefit which may accrue to an upright and godly man from a wicked and shameless slanderer. In fact, the fame of many would be circumscribed by narrow limits, if their slanderers did not help, even against their will, to sound it far and wide. The reason is, that the more a man is calumniated and traduced, the more do the honourable-minded, who prefer their own good name above all the treasures of the world, and are consequently reluctant to believe discreditable things of others, feel bound to take into account the person, look, gestures, and dispositions of him who utters the calumny, and so are led to feel a deeper interest than they otherwise would, in the party against whom it is levelled. The ultimate consequence is, that the rose remains, after all, a fragrant and beautiful flower, and the garlic an offensive weed; I mean that the virtuous man continues to be honoured and beloved, while the slanderer is disgraced and hated. Besides, the slanderer exercises the good man's patience, shows him the maliciousness of the devil, weans him from the world, exercises him in humility, acquaints him with his sins, and incites him to fly from the vices with which

he is charged, and to cultivate the opposite virtues. In short, every calumny thrown at him is a pearl that will one day beautify his celestial crown. This is what King David affirms when he says : *Lord, in humbling me* (by shame and persecution) *Thou hast made me great.* (Ps. xviii. 35, Luth. vers.)

My God, *Thou makest all things work together for good to them that love Thee.* (Rom. viii. 28). That I do love Thee, is no doubt more than I can say of myself. But that I earnestly wish to love Thee, I can with truth declare. Yea, could I collect in my heart the love of all angels and all men, I would pour forth the whole flood to Thee and Thee alone. O, then, let the reproaches of mine enemies become to me a praise, and their curse a blessing !

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### CXXVIII.

#### THE ECHO.

MAY 7.

ONE fine morning, as *Gotthold* was singing a hymn in the open air, he heard his voice reverberating from some neighbouring rocks. It seemed as if a



charming echo meant to swell the sacred strain, and help him to raise it aloft to God. Wholly forgetting that devotion of the heart, which is the soul and life of prayer and psalmody, he took great delight in the pleasing reduplication of his voice. It occurred to him, ere long, however, that the Divine purpose of the echo could never be to hinder him from paying his debt of praise, but rather to afford him an occasion of prosecuting pious thoughts; and he exclaimed: Here, O my God, I have a type of Thy goodness, for that re-echoes my believing prayer, as I sensibly feel in my heart. When I cry, *My God!* Thou answerest, *thy God*. The echo also reminds me, that at no time and in no place—not even in a pathless desert—am I alone, but have always Thee for my witness, and Thee for my companion. *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways, for there is not a word in my mouth, but lo! Lord, Thou knowest it altogether.* (Ps. cxxxix. 2-4). *Enable me, therefore, continually to walk before Thee* (that is in Thy sight, never forgetting Thy Divine omnipresence and omniscience) *and be perfect.* (Gen. xvii. 1.) Thereupon *Gotthold* continued his *prayer* more devoutly than before.

## CXXIX.

## THE STORK.

MAY 8.

SOME pious friends, who were walking in the country, observed a stork seeking its food upon a beautiful meadow. One of them immediately observed: Let us here call to mind the complaint which the God of mercy makes by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah. (Jer. viii. 7.) *The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but My people know not the judgment of the Lord.* Alas! how many there are who neglect the day of grace; and although the long-suffering God opens wide to them the gate of heaven, and stretches forth His hand, and says, Here I am (Isaiah lviii. 9), pay no attention, but rather seek an open door to hell—I mean the opportunity of following after their sins. O God! keep us from security and hardness of heart; and make our life a continual act of repentance, and return to Thee!

*Gotthold* subjoined : I lately read a very remarkable circumstance respecting these birds, namely, that so strong is their affection for their young, that they are not afraid even to die for them. There have been instances of conflagrations, in which they flew to and fro, with water in their beaks, to save their nests upon the burning houses. Nay, it once happened at Delft, in Holland, that, finding it impossible to preserve their brood—they placed themselves upon the nest, spread over them their wings, and so perished with them in the flames. That is what is called dying for love ! And of whom should such a circumstance remind us, if not of Him who would fondly gather all the poor children of men under His wings—who, upon the cross died, not indeed *with* us, but *for* us, and died of love. Yes, verily, no death could have killed Him. But love to us brought Him from heaven, and stretched and slew Him upon the cross. The favourite season for gathering and drying plants is when they are in fullest vigour and fairest blossom ; and it seems to me as if the heavenly Father had destined for the death of His well-beloved Son the time at which the love of the Son had attained its utmost fervour. And as Jesus was in love, so in love did He also



rise again from the dead, and ascend into heaven, and now and through all eternity, can do nothing but dearly love the children of men. O that we had no eyes and no heart but for such a love as this ! O that it kindled in our bosoms an ever fresh and ever fervent love in return !

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CXXX.

THE SWALLOW.

MAY 9.

ONE day in spring, *Gotthold* observed a swallow busily employed in building its nest, and fastening it to one of the windows of the church. It collected and wrought the clay with its bill ; and, although it could carry little at a time, still, by dint of unceasing industry, it contrived, ere long, to fashion and complete the fabric. Here, said he to himself, I have a pleasing image of the industrious and godly man. Many such commence life as poor as this bird, which has nothing but what God allots it, or its bill can scrape together. Nevertheless, if they do not grow weary in prayer and well-doing, the bountiful Giver



of all good gives them one penny to-day, and another to-morrow, until they accumulate a heap of surprising magnitude. If, however, it be true that persevering labour, conjoined with the Divine blessing, can do so great things, I ought to act upon this truth in collecting spiritual riches. My abilities are small, and my faith weak—still I will trust to God's gracious aid, and never doubt that, by steady exercise and holy diligence, my Christianity will increase and improve from day to day. It is Thy method, O God, when Thou hast a great work in hand, to begin with little things, or even with nothing, that Thy excellent power and free grace may have all the glory. Even so I will never fear the successful increase of my godliness, however small it may be, so long as Thy good Spirit does not cease to work within me.

*Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.  
Thy Spirit is good. Lead me into the land of upright-  
ness.* (Ps. cxliii. 10.)

## CXXXI.

## THE CHILD'S GIFT.

MAY 10.

A YOUNG girl, with whose mother *Gotthold* was conversing in a garden, approached him at first with a few leaves, and at last with a flower which she had plucked beside the walk, and, with child-like grace, offered it to him as a present. Well, said he, my little maid, why should I not be satisfied with thy small gifts, bestowed as they are with a simple and childlike desire of giving, even as God must needs be, with similar gifts of mine. Fondly would I often bring to Him great faith, glowing charity, deep devotion, spiritual praise, sincere prayer, and perfect childlike obedience. But, though I search the whole garden of my heart, I can find no such flowers as these, or any worthy of being presented to Him, and He must be content to receive instead, weaknesses, good wishes and intentions, endeavours and commencements. And so He is. He has shewn us His fatherly and affectionate heart, by preferring the

two mites cast by the poor widow into the treasury, above all the costly gifts of the rich (Luke xxi. 2, 3), and by declaring that even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward. (Matt. x. 42.)

O my Father, my soul rejoices and exults that Thou art its God—that it can hope to obtain all things from Thee—and that Thou art gracious enough to accept the poor gifts which, with a child's feeble hand, it ventures to present. I will, however, labour at all times to improve my gift. The best products of my powers and faculties I will bring and make oblation of them, by the hand of Jesus, my Mediator: That will secure for them, however poor, acceptance from Thee.

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## CXXXII.

### THE CAGED BIRD.

MAY 11.

GOTTHOLD had kept a singing bird for some time, in a cage, so that at last it became habituated to its prison, and not only warbled its cheerful and



pleasant notes, but even when the door was opened, showed no desire to escape. Observing this, he could not help saying to himself: Ah me! would that I could learn from this bird contentment with my condition and submission to the Divine will! Would that I were habituated to the ways and dealings of my God, and believed in my heart that His designs towards me cannot but be good! This little bird is, indeed, imprisoned, but it receives abundance of food, and, therefore, is content, hops about upon the perch, sings its song, and has no desire to change its condition. Even so God often environs me with divers crosses and straits; but never yet has left me destitute of comfort or succour. Why, then, am I not happy? Why do I not sing, and thank Him with a joyful heart, even in the midst of tribulation? One feels constrained to do, as Luther expresses it, lift the hat, and say to such a bird, "Dear doctor, I must confess that I greatly lack your skill. You sleep by night in your little nest, undisturbed by care. In the morning you rise, cheerful and merry, take your seat upon your perch, warble your song of praise and gratitude to God, and then seek and find your food."



Well then, my God, I too will be content and happy, and wish for nothing but what Thou wilt. From my cross, my burden, my adversity, I will not ask to be relieved until it please Thee to relieve me. Nay, I have no desire even to be in heaven, so long as it is Thy pleasure that I should serve Thee and Thy church in this life of misery and toil. To me let Thy will be heaven ; Thy counsel, wisdom ; Thy good pleasure, satisfaction ! The only wish I have is, that it may be well with me in time and eternity. But, as this my wish is also Thy will, our end and aim are one and the same, and it is only about the ways and means of attaining it, that we sometimes disagree. No harm, however, is done, although the way Thou ledest me, is different from that which my folly reckons good ; provided Thou ledest me well, and I secure the object of my desire.

## CXXXIII.

## THE TREES IN BLOSSOM.

MAY 12.

ONE day in spring, when the weather was beautiful and the fruit trees showed one mass of blossom, *Gotthold*, walking in his garden, and feasting his eyes with their splendour, made the following observations to a friend: These trees bear much more blossom than they can possibly ripen into fruit. This shows in them an inward and natural disposition to pay liberally for the ground they occupy, but afterwards they are more or less hindered by outward circumstances, from carrying it into effect. It is the same with good men. Ah me! how large, how keen, how many thousand-fold are often their good resolutions and inward desires to love and serve the Lord! O God, we hear them cry, had I the love of all angels and men, it should burn for Thee alone! Had I ten thousand hearts, to Thee should they be consecrated and resigned! Had I

the tongues of all mankind, their only employment should be to praise and extol Thee, O God of glory. With what alacrity and joy I will henceforth serve Thee! Ah, me! why did I not know Thee sooner, O Thou pure and eternal love! *Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.* (Ps. cxix. 115.) At such a time, the tree is in full blossom; and the inward impulse of the Holy Spirit, and the constraining power of the love of Christ, are powerfully felt. Scarce a tithe of the blossom, however, ripens into fruit. But as man, notwithstanding, takes pleasure in beholding it upon the tree, so does God delight in a heart overflowing with fervour, and holy resolutions, and in the fruits and works of righteousness, though these may at first be few.

O Lord, my God and Father, have patience likewise with me, and be satisfied with the blossom and poor firstlings of my Christianity. Do Thou also purge me, and vouchsafe to me Thy blessing, that I may become more and more fruitful and productive.

## CXXXIV.

## THE TREES IN BLOSSOM AND THE BEES.

MAY 13.

As they further discoursed upon this subject, they observed that the bees were haunting the trees in crowds, humming among the branches, and gathering honey in the flowers. See, said *Gotthold*, Here is an image of temporal prosperity. So long as there is blossom on the trees, and honey in the blossom, the bees will frequent them in crowds, and fill the place with their music; but, when the blossom is over, and the honey gone, they, too, will disappear. The same happens in the world among men. In the abodes of fortune and pleasure, friends will be found in plenty; but when fortune flies away, they depart along with it. Temporal gain is the world's honey, and the allurements with which you may entice it whithersoever you will; but where the gain terminates, there, likewise, do the love and friendship of the world stop. For this reason, let all good men



be advised to fly to Christ crucified, who never forsakes, in their distress, those who truly seek Him.

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CXXXV.

THE TREES IN BLOSSOM AND THE BEES

(2D MED.).

MAY 14.

GOTTHOLD's friend here took up the discourse, and said : When I see the trees in blossom, and the bees humming around them, I generally think of the joys of eternal life. How so? asked *Gotthold*; Because, replied his friend, God will be there a tree for ever blossoming, and for ever full of the honey of eternal peace and consolation ; and in and around it will the elect hover, enjoying its sweetness, to the full delectation of their souls, blessing it, and chanting its praise with joy that shall never end. Admirable, said *Gotthold*, O what a meeting we shall then have, and how we shall sing and rejoice ! God help us to it, through Jesus Christ, Amen.

## CXXXVI.

## THE TULIPS.

MAY 15.

A SKILFUL gardener had planted a bed with tulips of different colours. Although he could count more than thirty varieties, still no two of them were the same. But the hand of nature had painted, striped, stained, spotted, and shaped this in one way, and that in another. As he stood and beheld them with admiration and delight, he could not help exclaiming: *I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith.* Gotthold was standing by, and observed: Here we have an image of the manifold graces and gifts with which God endows and adorns the children of men, that each in the station in which he is placed may let the light of them shine to the glory of God and the good of his

neighbour. How beautiful the flowers look in their sweet confusion ! How the faintest breath of air makes them bend their heads to each other, as if they meant to kiss ! How the beauty of the one, so far from impairing, serves to heighten that of the other ! Who could, without rapture, behold a diversity so harmonious and charming ! Even so does the Most High bestow His diverse gifts, *dividing them to every one severally as he will.* (1 Cor. xii. 11.) And O how good it is—how sweet and charming—when those who are colleagues in office, or brother-artists, or fellow-citizens, dwell together in unity—when, moved by the spirit of love, they combine their heads for salutary counsels—when, estranged by no dislike, but leagued in the bonds of friendship, they stand side by side, and with one accord serve God and man with their several gifts !

My God, unite us in peace through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, that we may love one another with a pure heart fervently. (1 Peter i. 22.)

## CXXXVII.

## THE NIGHTINGALE.

MAY 16.

GOTTHOLD was walking beside a brook, whose opposite bank was overgrown with thorns, and other bushes. This thicket was the haunt of several nightingales, which, at a little distance from each other, raised their voices, and, as they are wont, warbled with such art and spirit, that they seemed to be competing, each endeavouring to excel the others, and do its best. He listened for a while with delight, and thanked God for the musicians which His marvellous goodness has provided at so cheap a rate for the entertainment of man, and whose little tender throats pour forth all sorts of curious notes, such as the many instruments, devised by human art, can scarcely imitate. Endeavouring to find farther entertainment for devout thought, he said to himself: This little homely-looking bird, with its loud, and clear, and changeful



melody, reminds me that the Most High does not scorn the praises presented to Him by His lowly and despised people, and mingled sometimes with their sighs, and sometimes with their exultations. It vies with its companions, trying which can warble most sweetly, and chooses, so to speak, man for umpire. Where, among Christians, do we find so worthy a strife? Which of us labours to praise his Creator and Redeemer with hearty zeal, as if he wished to take the chief burden of the work, and to outstrip his fellows? The nightingale's notes are always sweetest, when it sees that it has man for a listener, as if it knew that the purpose for which it received its melodious voice, was to entertain him, divert his mind from unseasonable care and sorrow, and invite him joyfully to praise the Divine name. And should not I, likewise, take all the greater pains with the poor song of thanksgiving which I chant to the glory of my God, knowing, as I do, that He and all the holy members of the family of heaven listen to it with delight?

O Thou God, Thou holy God! how sweetly the voice of this little bird of Thine now sounds in my ear! What shall I say, when, exalted to the realms of bliss, I shall hear the voices of the many thousands of the elect angels and men!

## CXXXVIII.

## THE CATERPILARS.

MAY 17.

GOTTHOLD had feasted his eyes upon the rich blossom of the trees, and indulged the hope that, in autumn, he would joyfully gather the fruit. In a few days, however, he discovered that a noxious mildew had bred a multitude of caterpillars, and that these had consumed both blossoms and leaves, and left the branches as naked as if they had been scorched with fire. Such, thought he, is the fate of human hopes and pleasures, which vanish like vapour, before we are aware. Wherever there are leaves, blossom, and fruit, be sure there will also be caterpillars to waste and consume them. When we fancy our prosperity to be in full blossom, and prepare to enjoy it to our heart's content, in a moment we discover that it has vanished like a shadow. All that is good here beneath the sun is attended by some evil, or encounters some foe. Pleasure, riches,

honour, and joy are sure to have care, disgrace, adversity, and affliction in their train. There is no pleasure without pain—no joy without sorrow. O the folly of expecting lasting felicity in a vale of tears, or paradise in a ruined world !

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CXXXIX.

THE CATERPILLAR'S NEST.

MAY 18.

As he proceeded through his orchard, he found one caterpillar's nest after another, and prepared to remove them from the trees. A friend who joined him while thus employed, observed: Such a nest of caterpillars appears to me to resemble an ungodly family, a disorderly tavern, an undisciplined school, or any other place of the sort where one wicked person seduces his fellows, and he who is already a child of the devil rears many others; so that iniquity often gains a sudden ascendancy, and it becomes impossible to tell where to apply a check, or what remedy to advise. 'Tis all too true, said *Gotthold*,

and alas ! how lamentable, in these days of ours, to see the tree of the Church infested as it is with caterpillars' nests, and standing naked and stripped, with scarce a leaf, blossom, or fruit. To what a fearful extent atheism and epicurean sensuality prevail ! Woe to the slothful husbandman, to whose care God hath committed it ! Why do they not labour with unwearied zeal to destroy the nests of the caterpillars ?

O God, Father in heaven, Thou chief husbandman of the world, interpose for Thy Church's deliverance, and cleanse it from all such noxious insects !

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CXL.

ANOTHER CATERPILLAR'S NEST.

MAY 19.

AFTER a while *Gotthold* proceeded : Let us not, however, forget that we have all such a caterpillar's nest in our own bosoms ; I mean, a carnal and depraved heart, in which wicked lusts, the spawn of original sin, are bred and swarm. These, if indulged,



immediately creep forth, and destroy both soul and body. It gives the Christian enough to do to keep them down, and at last put them to death. To this effect, Luther himself said: That he was more afraid of his own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals; and to myself a good man once observed: My own heart makes life bitter to me, and death sweet.

Over this caterpillar's nest, help me, Lord, to watch diligently, and with all my might to check its brood of vices. Oh, when wilt Thou save me from myself, and from my own heart!



## CXLI.

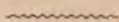
## THE WASTED TREES.

MAY 20.

WHILE occupied with his task, *Gotthold* looked once more with sorrow on the trees which the caterpillars had so shamefully pillaged, and then said: These trees present us with a meet emblem of youths carefully trained, but afterwards corrupted by bad company. Many a young man blossoms with the

goodly evidences of a discreet, godly and virtuous character, so long as he continues under the faithful charge of parents and teachers, but is afterwards seduced and depraved by wicked associates, so that he is no longer like himself, and for all their pains, anxieties, and outlay, parents have no return but a good for nothing in the family.

O beloved Father in heaven, Thou knowest what is my daily prayer to Thee for my children. Keep them from the temptations and allurements of an ungodly world. They are Thine. Thou gavest them to me, and to Thee I have given them back. O do Thou, therefore, bless and keep them, that they may bring forth much fruit to Thy glory, my own comfort, and their neighbours' good, and at last accomplish their salvation.



## CXLII.

### THE BEANS IN BLOSSOM.

MAY 21.

It is well known that when the beans are in flower, they emit a sweet and pleasing fragrance, which

the air wafts to a great distance. One day this reminded *Gotthold* of having read that the islands of Ceylon, Madagascar, and some others, which produce abundance of costly spices, exhale so powerful an odour from their shores, that mariners often scent it long before they are within sight of the land. He thereupon exclaimed with exultation of heart: My God! if the products of this earth are so pleasant, what may I not expect from those of heaven! Often do Thy faithful people inhale sweet odours, wafted to them from the land of immortals by Thy good Spirit, the Pentecostal wind. In these they have a foretaste and evidence of celestial bliss, and without them, how could they endure all their tribulation!

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CXLIII.

THE FATHER.

MAY 22.

GOTTHOLD proceeded: When I reflect upon the words of Thy prophet, *How great is Thy goodness O Lord, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear*

*Thee* (Ps. xxxi. 19), it seems to me that he means to depict God as a Father who, no doubt, keeps His children under discipline, and subjects them to the rod, but who, with all his labour and pains, still aims at nothing but to lay up for them a store which may contribute to their comfort, when they have grown to maturity, and learned the prudent use of it.

My Father, in this world Thou hidest from Thy children Thy great goodness, as if it did not pertain to them. But being Thy children, we may be well assured that the celestial treasures will be bestowed upon none else. For this reason, I will bear my lot with patience. But oh! from time to time, waft to me a breath of air from the heavenly land, to refresh my sorrowful heart; I will then wait more calmly for its full fruition. *How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* (Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2.) *When shall I come and appear before God?* (Ps. xlii. 2.)



## CXLIV.

## MAY BOUGHS.

MAY 23.

MANY districts observe on Whitsunday the old custom of decorating private houses and churches, with green boughs. On such a day several friends met together after divine service, when one of them asked: What good lessons ought we learn from these green boughs above our heads? To this an aged man replied: They remind me of my condition. These boughs, when placed in water, retain for a while their freshness and verdure, but at last, and ere long, wither away. It is the same with us old men; we are cherished with the utmost care, and receive all kinds of generous meat and drink, and likewise such medicines as are necessary to recruit our ebbing powers. And all this helps, as long as it can. At last, however, the word *Depart* is heard, and then we wither and perish. Moreover, as the perfume exhaled by these May boughs

is sweetest when they are about to fade, so, like them, I endeavour to make the close of my life sweet and fragrant by a worthy deportment, and honourable name. For I hold it to be the duty of the old to set a pattern of godliness and virtue to the young; and as they have no longer a great amount of work to do, to be the more diligent and fervent in prayer. God help me (he continued, taking off his hat), to the eternal glory of His name, ere long, to lay at His feet this silver crown with which He has been pleased to adorn my head. (Rev. iv. 10; Prov. xvi. 31.) These thoughts were greatly relished by the company, and gave occasion to further cheerful and pious reflection.

One of the friends spoke of the green boughs that decorated the church, observing that they resembled unstable, wavering, and hypocritical professors, of whom no small number usually occupy the seats in God's house. As the boughs continue green for awhile, but having no root, speedily wither, so do these Christians for awhile believe, *but, in the time of temptation, fall away*. They have of godliness, *but deny its power* (2 Tim. iii. 5), and at length become utterly sear; that is, they enjoy no comfort, die in their sins, and fall a prey to the

eternal fire. God grant us all that, *being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ* (Ephes. iii. 17), *we may be like green olive trees in His house.* (Ps. lii. 8.)

At last *Gotthold* spoke, and said : Sitting as we here do in testimony of the gladness of our hearts, under these green boughs, they may likewise be meet memorials to us of temporal and earthly joy. That, like their verdure and beauty, is perishable and fleeting. Ere we are aware, the boughs shed their green foliage, and leave nothing behind but naked rods, proper for chastising froward children. In like manner, all that remains from the fruition of mere worldly pleasure, is repentance and a heavy heart. Nay, God often converts the sinful indulgences of youth into a painful rod, with which to correct the transgressor all the days of his life. Let us, therefore, rejoice, beneath the May boughs, but let it be in the fear of the Lord, that the faint and fleeting enjoyment be not changed into a great and lasting misery.

O, my God, 'tis well, methinks, that worldly joys are of such a kind as induces, and even compels, us to seek a better. My delight is in Thee, in Jesus my Saviour, and in His grace and word. These are



May boughs which never lose their verdure; and never once did I take my seat beneath them, without experiencing refreshment and consolation.

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CXLV.

WORMWOOD.

MAY 24.

IN the city where *Gotthold* lived, it was usual at funerals to fasten upon the coffin, and inter with it in the grave, a cross of wormwood. Being asked what could have been the meaning and object of our worthy ancestors in instituting such a custom, *Gotthold* replied: I am of opinion, that in common with the practice which prevails in other districts, of planting wormwood upon graves, they intended not merely emblematically to represent that life's toils and sorrows, and death's pang, are very bitter, but also to remind us, that when departed saints expire, so likewise does their misery, that affliction of every kind lies dead and buried with their dust, and that now they repose calmly and sweetly in their graves.



The plant of wormwood ought always to remind us of death. It is bitter to the taste, but also in many respects wholesome. Even so death is painful to human nature, but yet it emancipates the believing soul from affliction and adversity, from care and sorrow. Lady Agnes, the wife of Henry, Margrave of Meissen, when on her death-bed, had a dream, in which an angel appeared, and presented her with a draught in a golden cup. On tasting it she sighed, and said: Ah me; how harsh and bitter! but the angel answered, Be of good cheer, the sweetness will soon come. Upon this she awoke, told the dream to her husband, and expired—no doubt to go to heaven, and experience in its everlasting felicity the truth of the angel's words. Yes; death to the righteous is, indeed, a wholesome but bitter draught, succeeded by ineffable sweetness. It is also averred, that when the salts which the art of the apothecary extracts from wormwood-ashes is raked into the earth, the place is soon covered with plenty of wormwood plants, which shoot from the ashes or salts as from a seed. If this be the case, it affords a beautiful figure of the resurrection of our bodies. These, during our life on earth, are a true plant of wormwood, full of bitterness and disquiet, and are reduced

by death to dust and ashes. But God, in His own time, will rear them from their ruins afresh, adorn them with incorruption, brightness, and glory, and in heaven give them to drink of pleasures for evermore.

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CXLVI.

THE WALNUT-TREE.

MAY 25.

SOME worthy persons had seated themselves beneath a walnut-tree, in order to enjoy the protection of its shade from the heat of the day. *Gotthold* happening to pass, accosted, and warned them not to tarry long where they were, as the shade of the walnut-tree is injurious to the health, and usually causes severe headache. On their replying that they were not, as yet, sensible of the slightest bad effects, he rejoined: But you certainly will experience them afterwards, though not, perhaps, for a day. In this tree, he proceeded to say, we have an emblem of bad company. A good man, when obliged

to associate and converse with persons of an opposite character, often resolves that he will be upon his guard, keep the door of his senses barred, and allow nothing sinful to enter his mind ; and in this, at first, he thinks that he succeeds. Afterwards, however, he is almost always obliged to confess, with sorrow, that bad company has been to him like this tree, whose shadow for awhile cools and refreshes us, but in the sequel is the cause of much trouble. Satan knows what advantage afterwards to take of all that has occurred, and once more calls up the carnal ideas before the inward eye, to disturb the mind in its holy exercises, and sensibly impair the fervour of its devotion. Though he may have listened without pleasure, and even with positive disrelish and abhorrence to the jests, extravagances, and follies, of the licentious company, the good man will yet have enough to do to resist the assaults and repel the darts of Satan. Truly, therefore, did an old teacher call bad companions the *wet nurses of the devil*. It is best to keep aloof from them. The little sinful pleasure they can give, will issue at last in pain and sorrow. The saintly Tauler says, in one of his discourses : “ Turn we, whithersoever or to whomsoever we may, in this sphere of time, we shall



find nothing but falsehood, treachery, and dispeace, in all outward objects and persons. Often where we seek, and think we shall surely find solace and delight, there we lose all inward comfort, and are wholly robbed of that peace of mind which has cost us many a day in our retirement to lay up. Nay, we even cause great trouble in our breast, for we burden ourselves with the guilt of idle, superfluous, and false words, with waste of time, and various other sins, which freeze the heart and extinguish love, so that conscience afterwards sorely gnaws and stings us." These, O my God, were the words of Thy servant, more than three hundred years ago. What would he have said now, when ungodliness has swelled to so overwhelming a flood, that a man of tender conscience can no longer pass his threshold, or look out of his window, without witnessing some scandal?

Oh, Lord, keep watch over my soul, and bring it through danger and Satan's many snares, despite his malice, unto everlasting life. O how shall I then extol Thy name for ever and ever!



## CXLVII.

## THE INVALID.

MAY 26.

GOTTHOLD one day visited a sick man, who suffered great inward anguish, as the drops of sweat upon his face testified. He tossed impatiently from side to side, upon his bed, often rose, and made them carry him from place to place, in the vain hope of finding ease and rest. *Gotthold* sighed to behold him, and thought with himself: How vain to think of curing inward care and trouble by external means, apply or change them as often as you may! The best thing for this poor man would be to exercise, if he could, some little self-control, and patiently wait till rest came. But, we often act in the same way in our spiritual troubles. The burdened conscience, and the heart pierced by the arrows of the Almighty, seeks rest in restlessness, tries every plan, and endeavours, by outward pleasure, to deaden the sense of inward anguish.

## CXLVIII.

## THE WOUNDED STAG.

MAY 27.

GOTTHOLD proceeded : As the stag, which the huntsman has hit, flies through bush and brake, over stock and stone, and thereby exhausts its strength, but does not expel the deadly bullet from its body ; so does experience show, that they who have troubled consciences, run from place to place, but wherever they go, bear with them their dangerous wounds. In such cases, the true remedy is patience, and the word of the prophet : *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.* (Micah vii. 9.) Sighs, groans, and tears, are not forbidden, but impatience, and incessant change of place, only aggravate the evil.

O Thou faithful God, if it be Thy gracious will to bring anguish like this upon my soul, enable me to *wait upon Thee, from whom cometh my salvation.* (Ps. lxii. 1.) Lord Jesus, in obedience to Thy word,

*when I labour and am heavy laden, I will go unto Thee, for with Thee I shall assuredly find rest unto my soul. (Matt. xi. 28, 29.) If I run at all, it shall be after Thee, and as a weeping child. As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice, and deliver my soul in peace from the battle that was against me. (Ps. lv. 16-18.)*

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CXLIX.

THE FLOWER-POT.

MAY 28.

WHEN walking in a garden, *Gotthold* saw a collection of flowers, planted in beautifully painted and ornamented pots, and shewn off upon a lofty stage; and he thought with himself: Even these flowers are daughters of the earth; by earth they live, and to earth they shall be turned. Of earth, too, are formed, and with earth are filled, the gaudy pots in which they grow. Wait but a little, and of all the showy flowers which figure on that lofty stage, there

will be no more to say than of the humble violet, that creeps upon the ground, and fades in the month of March. Paint such a flower-pot, and inscribe it with the motto : *We fade like other flowers ; Earth and nothing more*, and you will have an appropriate emblem of worldly greatness and glory. It is true, that in the garden of the world, God has exalted some men above the rest, and given them superior consequence and distinction, by the dignities, honours, offices, wealth, palaces, clothing, or attendants, which they possess. After all, however, they still continue earth and ashes, are sustained by the earth, like others, and when they have shed their blossoms, and finished their course, become earth in the strictest sense of the word.

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CL.

SHARP AIR.

MAY 29.

GOTTHOLD proceeded : It once happened, that within twelve or thirteen months, the following kingly flowers withered and fell, Charles V., Emperor



of Rome, two Kings of Denmark, the one upon the throne, the other in a dungeon, a King in France, a Duke in Venice, a Pope at Rome, a Count Palatine and Elector of the Empire, a Duke of Ferrara, three Queens in France, Hungary, and Poland, an Archbishop of Cologne, and ten Cardinals, making together twenty-two persons of imperial, royal, or princely rank. How sharp for these flowers must the air have been! Go now, then, ye children of men, boast of your exalted station, your honours, and your glory, but hear the words of the prophet: *All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever.* (Isa. xl. 6-8.) My God, to be lowly-minded is the best kind of exaltation. I care not for any dignity, not founded upon humility, nor for any ornament which does not last for ever. Leave me in my low estate, to flower to Thy honour, and my neighbour's good, as long as Thou wilt; but let me also become a rose of paradise, and bloom for ever in Thy presence.

## CLI.

## GOOD WEATHER.

MAY 30.

THE weather had been warm and pleasant for several successive weeks, when some one exclaimed : Alas ! what will come of these sultry days ? What must be the consequences of so long a tract of sunshine, without a drop of rain ? *Gotthold* replied : What say you ? Are you displeased that Heaven is kind, and that the fair sun has been, as it were, smiling upon us for so long a time ? Yes, rejoined the other, but we must look before us, for, as the crops in the field, and the fruit in the garden, are in the meanwhile drying up and withering, these kind smiles of the heavens may probably cause bitter weeping upon earth. Well, said *Gotthold*, if that be the case, let this weather remind us that temporal prosperity, which is usually compared to pleasant sunshine, frequently proves as little beneficial to us, as continued good weather to the crops. The

dense and gloomy clouds which, with their discharges of thunder and lightning, shake and terrify the earth, and water it with drenching rain, are not pleasant; but they make the herb of the field rejoice, and man and beast along with it. Light comes out of the darkness, and blessing accompanies the rain. Similar are the effects of trouble and adversity upon the mind. They cause pain and sorrow, but are succeeded by spiritual and divine satisfaction and joy. On the contrary, a long continuance of temporal prosperity is wont to be the harbinger of some great misfortune, or even of eternal perdition, as we see in the case of the rich man in the Gospel, and a thousand others. For, there can be no doubt, that you will search longer for one individual whom misfortune and adversity have driven to despair and ruin, than for a thousand whom success and prosperity have undone. Let us therefore, at all times, be suspicious of our good fortune; and just, as on sultry days like this, we are assiduous in watering our gardens, that the crops may not wither; so, in the time of our prosperity let us be diligent in prayer, that God may not deny us His grace, nor take away from us His Holy Spirit, and that so by His governance we may

walk prudently and humbly, and never pervert our temporal prosperity into the means of our eternal wretchedness.



## CLII.

## THE CLOUD OF TRIBULATION.

MAY 31.

MY God and Father, subjoined *Gotthold* in prayer, I call to mind the words of Thy prophet (Lam. iii. 44), *Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through.* Alas ! so it is too often with me and Thee. A dark cloud of trouble encamps between us. Nor can I complain of this, for it arises from my own sins and transgressions. Still, as the sun shines even behind the clouds, operates in them, and sheds its genial influence, with the rain, upon the earth ; so, even in trouble, Thou still continuest my God, and so powerful is Thy working in it, that, after a brief interval, I can mark the traces of Thy grace upon my soul ; and hence, whether smiling or frowning, Thou art still my beloved Father and my gracious God !



## CLIII.

## THE BIRD'S NEST.

JUNE 1.

WHILE walking in a garden, *Gotthold* saw a bird fly past, with several worms in its bill, and concluded that its nest and brood were at no great distance ; and this, indeed, on going a little to the side, to mark where it turned, he, after a brief search, discovered to be the case. It occurred to him that the little bird, thus betraying its young, by carrying to them their food, was a pleasing emblem of those parents, who, by right or wrong means, amass great possessions, professedly for the benefit of their children, but, as experience too frequently testifies, to their unspeakable injury. The reason is, because not only does the unjust acquisition of wealth entail the forfeiture of salvation upon the parents themselves, many of whom cast their souls into hell, that their children may have enjoyment in the present world, but because it also proves an inducement to

the children, either to imitate their parents' example, and walk in the same paths of avarice and injustice, or to squander in pleasure and luxury, what their parents earned by the sweat of their brows and the loss of their souls ; neither of which things can possibly be done without extreme spiritual danger. What good can come of fortunes, however vast, if a drop of blood, or a tear of the poor, stick to every penny ! How dreadful it is for parents to be treading the path of hell themselves, and, at the same time, building a bridge for their children to follow them at full speed !

My God, what shall I lay up for my children ? My fortune is small, and, after supplying my daily necessities, there is little or nothing left. Help me, then, to habituate them to Thy fear, to instruct them in piety, useful knowledge, and virtuous manners, to bequeath to them a good and honourable name, and to commit them unceasingly to Thy grace and blessing. I know no better provision to make for them than this.

## CLIV.

## THE WEEPING DAMSEL.

JUNE 2.

GOTTHOLD seeing a young lady in tears, and inquiring into the cause, was told, that in a company of persons of her own age, she had been slighted and overlooked on account of her poverty, plain attire, and simple manners. 'He thereupon exclaimed: Blessed is he whom the world slights and disregards! He is like the shipwrecked mariner, tossed by the violence of the sea, but tossed upon a cliff, where he can save his life. How good it is when the world, which usually plays the part of seductress for the devil, itself cuts off the opportunity of sinning! Believe me, those young ladies, who are so gaily attired, and so fondly worshipped and caressed, are like beautiful flowers, around which the bees and moths swarm in crowds, to rob them of their honey. Godliness is like a precious oil in a brittle phial. The best way to preserve it is to lay it

upon the shelf, and not trust it into imprudent hands. If you are no favourite with the world, let the world be no favourite with you, and this will adjust the balance. Make it your single aim to please God. Let the crown and wreath about your head be His grace ; your necklace, a string of texts of Scripture ; your pearls, tears of repentance, prayer, and love ; your garments, piety and the righteousness of faith ; your ring, a good conscience ; your lace, humility ; your white linen, an unblemished walk ; your favourite language, prayer ; your mirror, the law, and holy life of Jesus ; and your riches, heaven. Thus will you be the bride of Christ, and, in the land of glory, be preferred before many others.

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CLV.

THE ROWERS.

JUNE 3.

GOTTHOLD saw several sailors step into a boat to cross a river. Two took the oars, and as usual



turned their backs upon the shore to which they intended to sail. A third stood and kept his eye unaverted on the place where they wished to land, and which they very speedily reached. See here, he said, to those about him, what may well remind us of our condition. Life is a mighty river, rapidly flowing into the ocean of eternity, and returning no more. On this river we are all afloat in the bark of our vocation, which we must urge forward with the oars of industry and toil. Like these sailors, therefore, we ought to turn our back upon the future, put our confidence in God, who stands at the helm, and by His mighty power steers the vessel to where happiness and salvation await us, and diligently labour, unconcerned about anything else. We would smile were these men to turn round and pretend that they could not row blindfold, but must needs see the place to which their course was directed. And it is no less foolish in us to insist on apprehending, with our anxieties and thoughts, all things, whether future or at hand. *Let it be our part to ply the oar, and toil, and pray ; but let us leave to God to steer, and bless, and govern.*

O my God ! be with me in my little bark, and steer it according to Thy good pleasure. I will turn

my face to Thee, and as Thou shalt enable me, I will diligently and faithfully labour ; for all else Thou wilt provide.

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CLVI.

THE HEWN WILLOWS.

JUNE 4.

GOTTHOLD observed that some willow-trees, which had been hewn down and laid upon the ground, to mend the path, had sprouted, and sent their shoots upright into the air. This, said he, is a pleasing image of those who, having been humbled by sickness and divers misfortunes, lie, as it were, prostrate under the world's feet, but direct their sighs and aspirations, desires and thoughts, solely to the better world—of such a person, for instance, as Lazarus. O, how blessed is that humiliation which elevates the heart to heaven ! How desirable to lie beneath the feet of the world, in respect of our outward circumstances, while in spirit we repose in the bosom of God !

## CLVII.

## THE SNAIL.

JUNE 5.

A SNAIL, carrying its house upon its back, was creeping circumspectly along. It continually stretched forth its long feelers, and the moment it felt a breath of air, or encountered the smallest blade of grass, shrank back and retired into its shell. Here, said *Gotthold*, we see that there is no place like home; for this little creature chooses to bear the burden of its house along with it, wherever it goes, rather than leave it behind. I wish, too, from my heart, that we Christians, in our intercourse with the men of the world, were to imitate its manners, by walking carefully and circumspectly, and not trusting too confidently in any of their pleasures or indulgences.

O God! the home of my spirit is Thy grace and goodness, and never am I so happy as when I devoutly and tranquilly meditate upon them, and shut myself wholly up in them. There do I find rest for

my soul. There do I hold secret and familiar converse with Thee. There dost Thou give me to drink of Thy sweetness, till I am satisfied, and peacefully and securely repose in the lap of Thy grace, and under the shadow of Thy providence. This house of mine I will always bear about with me, and whether I meet with favour or sorrow in the world, will take refuge in it, and be safe.



## CLVIII.

## THE PICTURES.

JUNE 6.

GOTTHOLD visited a summer-house which was built in a garden in the suburbs of a great city, and adorned with a collection of beautiful paintings. As he looked about him, he observed a piece in which a vault, with a double row of pillars, was depicted with so much artistic skill and fidelity to the rules of perspective, that the spectator could scarcely believe that the surface on which he looked was flat, but imagined that he saw through it, and that the pillars



were ranged behind the canvass. Well, said *Gotthold* to himself, here one object is represented to me as near and another as remote, and yet that which seems remote, is in reality as near as that which is so in appearance. In the same way, we often imagine that death is a great way off, and that we have a long succession of years through which to live ; whereas, without our being aware of it, he is close at hand, and lurks behind the foremost pillar.

As he proceeded along, he found another picture representing an archer, so admirably painted, as to make the beholder suppose he was aiming at him, and just about to discharge the arrow. Well, said *Gotthold*, this answers not amiss. Death is a skilful and practised archer. He takes his aim every hour, and has no sooner discharged one arrow, than he has another upon the string. I will persuade myself that he is always aiming at me, and constantly endeavour that my life may be such as to give me no reason to be afraid of him.

At a little distance there was a picture of a pleasure garden, and upon an open space in the centre of it, a pillar of flame culminating into a crown. Let this, he said, admonish me : *That forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those*

*things which are before, I should press toward the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.* (Phil. iii. 13–14.) My endeavour should be to finish my course with joy. (Acts xx. 24.) Help me to this, my God, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

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## CLIX.

## THE HOP PLANT.

JUNE 7.

HAVING gone into a hop ground, *Gotthold* took pleasure in observing how elegantly the weak and slender plant twined around the poles, and climbed till it overtopped them, and began to reflect why it had pleased the infinitely wise Creator of all things to make this and other plants, such as the vine, the ivy, the pea, and the cucumber, which cannot grow without extraneous help and support. One reason, as he observed, no doubt was, that I might everywhere find objects to remind me how weak I am. These plants are destitute alike of beauty and fruitfulness, unless they find a pole to be the support

of their feebleness. It is the same with my soul, which labours under a thousand infirmities. Sin makes me weak and so does sorrow, and manifold temptations from within and without ; and how could I exist, or shoot towards heaven, unless upheld by the power of God and the stake of the cross of Christ ? These plants are impelled by a natural exigence to seek support ; so that we sometimes see them creeping for a space along the ground, and, as it were, languishing till they meet with something around which they can twine. Several of them, too, are provided by nature with little tendrils and bands, by which they fasten and attach themselves to their supports. Even so do I feel within me the motions of the Holy Spirit constantly reminding me of my weakness, inspiring me with repentance and humility, and making me yearn for the grace of God and the cross of my Lord Jesus. My tendrils and bands are the believing sighs with which I take hold of Christ, the prop and support of my salvation, and so, weak though I am, I stand even against the might of the gates of hell !

## CLX.

## THE CLOUDS.

JUNE 8.

AFTER a heavy fall of rain, and when a gentle east wind was beginning to clear the sky, *Gotthold* walked forth into the fields, thanked his God for the fertilizing storm; and lifting his eyes to the heavens and beholding the rolling clouds, said to himself: My God, there go the chariots in which (to use the language of weak men) Thou ridest forth to inspect Thy fields and gardens, Thy meadows, forests, and plains. Beggars are wont to run behind the chariots of the wealthy, and cry aloud for alms. To Thee, O God, we are all beggars, and when Thou ridest forth on Thy chariot of the clouds, we cry after Thee, *Give us this day our daily bread*. The clouds are also the pitcher with which, like a gardener, Thou waterest the sultry glebe in times of drought. They are the pipes by which Thou conductest moisture into the firmament, and thence



causest it to descend in rain, and bless the earth. They are Thy storehouses, richly filled with wine, beer, oil, butter, corn, and malt, and Thou openest it in Thy goodness, and satisfiest the desire of everything that lives. They are great curtains, which, at Thy good pleasure, Thou drawest as a covering for the plants, that they may not be withered and destroyed by the continuance of the heat. Not seldom, too, are they the arsenal in which Thou keepest Thine artillery of thunder and lightning, in order, at set times, to strike the children of men with reverential awe, or inflict upon them some great punishment.

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CLXI.

GOLD IN WATER.

JUNE 9.

GOTTHOLD recollected having once read, that if a cup be filled with water to the brim, so that the smallest addition of any fluid would cause it to overflow, it is, nevertheless, possible to drop into it

several gold coins, without any such effect. He tried the experiment, and finding it successful, remarked: What a beautiful image I have here of a contented Christian heart! God gives us all the necessities of life in full measure, and if we have these, we ought to be content. Sometimes, however, He also gives us superfluities, and drops one or more gold pieces into our cup. Unfortunately, however, there are too many whom this makes wanton, proud, and haughty, and who overflow in pomp, prodigality, and contempt of their poorer neighbours. It should not be so. We ought to learn both *how to abound and how to suffer need* with equanimity. (Phil. iv. 12.) Riches and prosperity ought not to inflate our pride. We should keep ourselves under the restraints of humility, and show ourselves grateful to God, and generous to our brethren. In that case, methinks, this cup will be our appropriate emblem.

My God, give me neither poverty nor riches (Prov. xxx. 8): *but whatever it may be Thy will to give, give me with it a heart which knows humbly to acquiesce in Thy will.*

## CLXII.

## THE CLUCKING HEN.

JUNE 10.

GOTTHOLD saw a clucking hen wandering about with her brood, and observing the care she took of them, reflected thus with himself: Our Saviour has, so far, honoured the clucking hen, as to choose it for an image of Himself, for He says of disobedient Jerusalem: How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. (Matt. xxiii. 37.) In point of fact, we behold in this animal a rich miracle of maternal affection. In some degree she does violence to her nature, changes her voice, seats herself, contrary to her habit, upon the earth, is continually scraping in the ground, and when she has found a corn, or worm, divides it among her chickens; she covers them with her wings, protects them, even above her ability, against hostile animals, and voluntarily undergoes all sorts of hardships and inconvenience in their behalf.

Lord Jesus, every hen I see shall remind me of Thy care and faithfulness, and, in all emergencies, I will take refuge beneath the wings of Thy grace. Who is he who shall then harm me ?



## CLXIII.

## THE WOOD-WORM.

JUNE 11.

ONE day, in his study, *Gotthold* heard a wood-worm busily employed gnawing the rafter, and it reminded him of a singular conception of death, which, as he had recently read, had been brought into vogue by certain learned and celebrated scholars. They represented it as a small invisible worm, produced in the corrupt fluids of the human body, and which gradually consumes the vital power. If their language be metaphorical, said *Gotthold* to himself, I have no objections to embrace their opinion. In point of fact, death is generated from the morbid secretions of the soul, in other words, from sins ; and it gnaws and consumes the life of man from his



birth, and at last, by God's permission, wholly undermines it. This little worm, however, which makes the noise I hear, deserves my thanks for the salutary interruption of my labours. It calls to me, as it were, to work diligently, as if I had the prospect of a long life, but, at the same time, also to pray, and prepare for death, as if I had not another day to live.

O Lord, help me often to remember that the end must come, that life has a term, and that it is fast passing away.



## CLXIV.

## THE SILK-WORM.

JUNE 12.

GOTTHOLD, on being shown some silk-worms, kept by a boy in a band-box, and fed with mulberry leaves, thought with himself: And so it is a worm that ministers to men the means of luxury and pomp. I could wish that no ribbon were ever either sold or put on, until such a worm were shown and contemplated. Perhaps this might lead some

to reflect how absurd it is for one worm to ornament himself with what another spins, especially considering that at last, with all his glory, he must become the prey of worms. For the rest, the silk-worm obeys the instinct which is common to all the caterpillar tribe. When it has eaten its portion, and lived its time, it looks about for some corner in which it may lie down, unseen and undisturbed, and die. There it immures and envelops itself in its web, and all the store which it has gathered, serves no other purpose than to make for it a burying-place. Alas, ye children of men ! you, too, eat and drink, accumulate fortunes, and strain every nerve to become great in the world, but all this issues at last in the necessity of choosing for yourselves a grave. Happy he who, from this insect, learns in time to forego temporal things, and bends all his thoughts to consider how he may at last die in peace !

Thou faithful God ! my chief anxiety is for my soul, and the best thing I can do for it is to wrap and clothe it in the fair white silk of Christ's righteousness. (Rev. xix. 8.) Grant, that like a beautiful butterfly, I may one day burst forth, and wing my way to the life eternal.

## CLXV.

## THISTLES.

JUNE 13.

As he was one day passing a field, *Gotthold* observed that there were many thistles mixed with the wheat, and rivalling it in growth, on which he observed : We often see the match of this in the world. It happens, for instance, with superior minds ; for along with the fine wheat of useful counsels and lofty thoughts, they likewise breed and foster many a thistle of folly and dangerous error. The same thing happens also with our own heart, which, when bedewed with the grace and spirit of God, sometimes promises to abound with the fruits of righteousness. But, alas ! how many thistles and weeds does not the enemy scatter among these, and how many grow of themselves, as in all barren land ? In fine, the same is also the case with our prosperity and temporal welfare. When our wheat is ripest, and we imagine that nothing remains but to apply the

sickle, and gather it in, in full sheaves, we find that the Most High has caused thistles to grow amongst it; I mean, He has checquered our prosperous state with much adversity, in order that we may recognize the nothingness of the world, and long all the sooner, and all the more ardently, for heaven.

My God! in the world there is no wisdom without folly, no happiness without misery, no piety without sin, no good without evil, and no use without abuse. O guide me to the place where Thou Thyself dwellest, and where Thou are surrounded with the adorations of Thine elect. There is no evil with Thee. In Thee I shall possess all things, for Thou wilt be all in all. (1 Cor. xv. 28.)



## CLXVI.

### WHITE LILIES.

JUNE 14.

GOTTHOLD had pulled a bunch of large white lilies, and having put them into water, placed them in his bed-room. The following night his sleep was sound,



and he found in the morning that his apartment was filled with fragrance. At the same time he also felt his head heavy, and could not shake off a certain lethargy. This reminded him of the opinion of a celebrated physician, that this pleasant perfume should be regarded with suspicion as a secret poison, and excluded from the bed-chamber. The same thing happens with the scent of ambergris. If long inhaled, it produces megrim and giddiness, and may at last even induce death. This, thought *Gotthold*, is a meet emblem of worldly fame, and that commendation of men respecting which the Saviour said: *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.* (Luke vi. 26.) So captivating is such flattery to both head and heart, that many a man is betrayed by it into security, relies too much upon himself, dreams that he is blessed, despises others, and is thus prepared for a fatal fall. With such caresses, the false *Delilah* lulls asleep many a highly-gifted *Samson*. For this reason the apostle well observes, that we should approve ourselves the servants of God, by honour and dishonour, and by good report and evil report. (2 Cor. vi. 8.) Many, after vanquishing by patience unmerited obloquy, have been betrayed to ruin by well-merited honour, and so humbled by

exaltation. It is, therefore, better for a man to be unconscious of his gifts, and never to hear the voice of praise, than to be misled by praise into presumption.

My God! help me always to recognize that in myself I am nothing, and enable me humbly to say with Thy apostle (1 Cor. xv. 10), *By the grace of God I am what I am.*

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CLXVII.

THE OWL BY NIGHT.

JUNE 15.

GOTTHOLD was one night unable to sleep; and not wishing to waste the time on unprofitable cares and thoughts, he struck a light with materials which he had always near his bed for an emergency of the kind, and began to read the Bible, or, as was well said, to listen to the voice of the Lord speaking to us in that holy book. An owl, which haunted the neighbourhood, perceiving the shining of the light, flew to the window, and uttered its usual cry. *Gott-*

hold thereupon thought with himself: This bird is commonly regarded as the harbinger of misfortune and death, so that many mortally hate it, and show little gratitude for its nocturnal song. Of this common superstition I don't approve, though I will so far make use of it, as to accept from the bird an admonition on the subject of my mortality. It may perform to me the office of the chamber-page, who every morning called out to the heathen king: *Remember that thou art a mortal man!* I wish to have, and look around me for more of such things, as both night and day, remind me of death, well knowing that nothing more effectually promotes a godly walk, contempt of the world, and aspirations after heaven. I will make death my friend, and try to keep in good acquaintance with him, in order that I may become familiar with his appearance, and so welcome him all the more joyfully when he comes with a commission from my God to take me out of the world.

CLXVIII.

DEATH.

JUNE 16.

GOTTHOLD proceeded: Many a man has an ill-favoured countenance, is lean and haggard, pale and sallow, and mean in his attire, and yet, under an ungainly exterior, conceals great talents and virtues. Such is the case with death. Ah me! how much that is good, and sweet, and blessed, is concealed beneath its sour aspect and transitory bitterness. *It is not I who die when I die, but my sin and misery.* As often as I think of death, I figure to myself that I see a messenger coming from a distant land, bringing me good news of my Saviour, the Bridegroom of my soul, and of the inheritance which He has purchased with His blood and reserves for me in heaven. What care I although the messenger have an ugly face, be armed with a long dart, wear a tattered coat, and knock rudely at my door? I attend less to his appearance than to his business.

My Faithful Saviour ! It should not distress me though all the birds of the air were daily and hourly to sing and discourse to me of my mortality. The nectar I sip from Thy dripping wounds, swallows up the few bitter drops which death pours out to me from his cup, at my departure from this world. What, Lord Jesus, should I long for more than to depart and be with Thee !

CLXIX.

THE BUTTERFLY CATCHERS.

JUNE 17.

GOTTHOLD one day saw a party of boys pursuing butterflies in a garden, and was amused to observe the pains and trouble which the little fowlers took to catch the gay insects. He remarked to a friend who was present : Do you know whom these children resemble ? They resemble learned and ingenious scholars, who, in starting all manner of useless questions, evince less skill and judgment than curiosity and pride. What else are soaring and ambitious

thoughts and speculations, but insects such as these ; and why may not the folly of the learned be quite as great as that of these children ? The one imagine that they have caught no common prey when they have broached some strange, fantastic, and intricate notion or query on spiritual or temporal things. Tell me, however, if they derive more benefit from this than the children do from what they catch. And yet, the world is unfortunately come to such a pass, that he who will not, or who cannot, hunt and catch such moths and painted flies, is looked upon as a weak-minded man. No doubt, when learning is conjoined with piety, it is like the diamond glittering and sparkling in a setting of gold, or like golden apples in dishes of silver. If, however, I have to choose between the two, I prefer piety, and will rather gain heaven with the unlearned, than be damned with accomplished and able men. *What is science without conscience ?*

My God, I know that in this life our knowledge is but in part, and that the chief and noblest of all sciences is to know Thee and the Lord Jesus. For this reason, I will devote all my diligence to believing in Christ, loving Him, and patiently following Him.

CLXX.

THE ROD.

JUNE 18.

GOTTHOLD, one day, visiting a friend, found him seated with his family at table, and observed that the children all received a due portion of food, and were required to eat it in a quiet and orderly way; but, that beside the father's plate, there was also lying upon the table a rod, to warn them against improprieties of conduct and manners. He thereupon observed to his friend: You treat your children as our heavenly Father treats His. He, too, prepares a table before them (Ps. xxiii. 5), and gives them all sorts of good things, spiritual and temporal, to enjoy, and yet the rod, which is another name for the cross, must likewise be at hand, that we may not become froward, but walk in holy fear and filial obedience. Of this truth, God has given us an almost similar emblem in the Sacred Scriptures. For the ark of the Old Testament contained not only the golden pot with the manna, but also Aaron's rod, which

blossomed (Heb. ix. 4), to intimate the authority He exercises over His family, and teach us that although He feeds the members with the *hidden manna* (Rev. ii. 17) of His sweet grace, He also purposes to use the rod, if He shall see cause, and to do both the one and the other for our welfare and salvation. The same hand prepares the table and wields the rod. From one and the same heart flow both comfort and cross. God continues our loving and gracious Father when He chastises and corrects, no less than when He refreshes and comforts us. A good man once pertinently said, that it was a doubtful matter whether bread or chastisement was best for children, because, while bread was necessary for them to live, chastisement was necessary for their living well. Even so must we, too, confess that the *dear cross is as needful to us as life itself, and far more needful and salutary than all the blessings and honours of the world.* In heaven, the glorified spirits, who now fully understand its mystery, and enjoy, in the everlasting rest, the sweet fruit which grows upon this thorny brier, will thank the all-wise and gracious God especially, for His holy cross and fatherly correction, without which they would never have reached the seat of bliss and glory. Let us also learn this lesson, and

say from the heart : *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.* (Ps. cxix. 71.) Whether we like it or not, the Lord our God will not change His ways. Whoever wishes to be His child, must take bread and sorrow together from His hand. No guest at His table need think it strange to see the rod upon it, and be obliged often to eat his heavenly Father's bread moistened with tears. Here, in this world, it cannot be otherwise ; but when we shall one day sit at His table in heaven, every rod shall be cast into the fire.

O my Father, I am becoming accustomed, by degrees, to Thy ways, and have no objection to the rules of Thy domestic government. Daily do I strive to learn, not only to relish the bread, but also to kiss the rod.

CLXXI.

THE FIG TREE.

JUNE 19.

In the garden of a nobleman there was a fig-tree growing among others — one of Gotthold's

relatives having gone to see it, plucked and brought to him a leaf from it, and inquired: Can this have been the tree which gave occasion to the first transgression, or those the leaves from which the first clothes were made? *Gotthold* replied, What does it matter whether we know or not, what the tree was which betrayed our first parents into their transgression and fall, seeing that we still daily eat forbidden fruit? What does it matter, whether we know or not, what leaves they used to cover their nakedness, seeing we still pluck fig-leaves from all the trees, by which I mean that we are never at a loss for pretexts to excuse our sins. It is vain curiosity to trouble the head with such futile questions, and not attend to our own condition. In order, however, that you may not lose your labour in bringing me this leaf, I will indicate to you another reflection which it suggests. As experience shows us the fig-tree is bitter in all its parts, leaf, bark, sap, timber, and root; but the fruit is sweet. Admire then the omnipotence of God, which can bring forth the sweet from the bitter, and think on the words of the holy apostle (Heb. xii. 11), *No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth*

the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. All is bitterness about the cross. It is painful to the flesh, which must be mortified, and that is bitter; the cross is of many kinds, and that is bitter; it often smites both body and soul at once, and that is bitter. Beneath the cross, however, we learn to pray, to exercise patience, to deny self, to despise the world, and sigh for heaven, and these fruits are sweet indeed. O! how well did the great divine, who was asked where He had learned to preach in so edifying a strain, reply: In the school of affliction. With equal truth might many a pious Christian, who has learned to pray devoutly, and speak a word of comfort to the distressed, declare: It was the cross that taught me. What harm is there although the tree of the cross be bitter, if it only bear the sweet fruit of godliness and joy!

Well then, my God, plant this tree of Thine in my garden. Bitter though it be, I will cheerfully welcome it, and water it with my tears, until, in due season, it produces the sweet fruit of consolation.

CLXXII.

THE FOLDED HANDS.

JUNE 20.

THE grace having been one day said at table, the question was started, what might be signified by the custom of folding the hands at prayer, when *Gotthold* began and said: The outward posture and carriage of the body and its several members, during prayer, has been different in different periods, and among different nations. In the Old Testament, and likewise at the commencement of the New, it was the custom to pray with the arms and hands extended, so that the body of the suppliant formed a perfect cross. This custom was, no doubt, suggested to the early believers by the remembrance, and was intended also to serve as a memorial, of their Lord's death. In subsequent times it gave place to our method of folding the hands, which has not only the same, but, as I shall endeavour to explain, a much larger import. We pray with our thumbs across,

and this ought to remind us to found our expectations of being heard upon our crucified Saviour. The fingers intertwined admonish us in like manner, to pray in sincerity, with pacific and forgiving hearts, inasmuch, as if our minds be alienated by strife and discord, our prayers cannot please the God of peace. It often happens, that during prayers, and as the warmth of our devotion increases, the hands involuntary clasp closer and closer together, as if we grasped some object between them, and wished to hold it fast. Of this, a pious man once said, "Often, when in prayer, I feel as if I held between my palms the fatherly heart of my God and the bloody hand of the Lord Jesus, for I remind the one of His divine love and inconceivable mercies, and I grasp the other by His promise, and strive to hold Him fast and say : *I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.*" (Gen. xxxii. 26.) As we likewise know that a devout heart is the chief requisite for acceptable prayer, so may the linking of the fingers remind us that we ought not in prayer to permit our thoughts to flutter to and fro, but should bind them firmly together by holy resolution, and point them to the one object of calling upon God in spirit and in truth. (John iv. 24.) In like manner, finally, the fold-

ing of the hands conduces to humility in prayer ; inasmuch as we thereby present ourselves before a righteous God in something of the attitude of malefactors, with our hands bound. O that when we do so, we may clearly and inwardly feel, that by our manifold sins we have justly deserved to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, so that in our prayers we can no longer plead our rights, but only implore mercies.

Lord Jesus, give me a truly believing, meek, and humble heart, and then when I pray, I shall never pray in vain.

CLXXIII.

THE MADMAN.

JUNE 21.

IN a company, mention was made of a poor man who had lost his wits. As usually happens, this elicited a great variety of opinions and conjectures, and most who were present, proved hasty judges—for they concluded that the person in question must

have been a sinner above the common, as he had met with so severe a punishment. On this *Gotthold* remarked: Be assured that God not unfrequently punishes our sins upon our neighbour's back, and flogs the dog to amend the child. If you suppose this sufferer to be the greatest of sinners, you do not yet know yourselves, and need to learn to confess with the apostle, "Of all sinners I am the chief." (1 Tim. i. 13.) He should be an example to us all, and induce us to reflect on what we have ourselves deserved. Remember the fig-tree, which a word of the Son of God caused to wither away, in order that, from its place by the way side, it might preach to all that passed of the curse which they had incurred, and of God's immeasurable mercy which had averted it from their heads. (Matt. xxi. 18.) Strike upon a bell, and though it alone receives the blow, the sound rings in the ears of numbers. So was it meant to do, and the punishments of a most just and merciful God, have the same intention. He smites one that many may be alarmed and driven to repentance. Let us, therefore, be concerned for this poor man, and show him heart-felt pity and all manner of affectionate service—and concerned also for ourselves, to search out our sins, to repent of

them and humbly implore pardon. If not, God has the right to do with us as with him.

Wert Thou, O my God, to contend with us, who could answer Thee for one of a thousand ! O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of face. (Dan. ix. 7.) Wherefore, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. (Ps. vi. 2.)

CLXXIV.

THE SCHOOL-BOYS.

JUNE 22.

GOTTHOLD, visiting a school, saw a number of boys. He counted among them twenty who were almost all of one height, and, probably, likewise, of one age. Nothing, however, could be more wonderful than the difference between them in face, look and demeanour. Some had a bold, reckless, and untamed air ; others were decent and modest. Some laughed, and some looked sad ; some appeared honest, and some tricky, and scornful ; some open and ingenu-

ous ; and others sly and cunning. He thereupon said to himself : How difficult a task is the education of the young, inasmuch as the vast difference of their dispositions and capacities necessarily requires a difference of treatment. As God rears out of the ground many kinds of plants, which, though each differ from the other in shape and virtues, have yet all the one common end of ministering to man ; so has He been pleased to mould men themselves according to a general pattern, but yet to make them individually unlike, and adapt the natures of all to His own glory, and the general good. How desirable were they all trained and guided from childhood in the right way ! The teacher must know, with prudent moderation, and mixed severity, and gentleness, to address even the most different minds, and to become all to all of them. What are schools but nurseries, in which young trees are raised from the seed, in order to be afterwards transplanted into the different professions, and there bring forth fruit ? To a single teacher, the hope of an entire city is often intrusted.

My God, our children are jewels, and nobody knows how to polish and set them better than Thy-

self. O be Thou therefore the Chief Inspector and Head of all schools, and give grace that, in our days also able men may be raised up, who, in days to come (if it be Thy pleasure, that such days shall come), may serve Thee in the world.



CLXXV.

THE MARRIAGE.

JUNE 23.

GOTTHOLD was present at a marriage, and, after the performance of the ceremony, observed, with wonder, the pains and unremitting attention and zeal of the parents of the bride to entertain the guests and minister to their enjoyment. Well, said *Gott-hold* to himself: Marriage seems to me to be one of the most unaccountable of miracles. These parents love their child; they brought her into the world with sorrow and pain, educated her with much labour and expense, and now have reared her to that time of life, at which she might be helpful to them in their impending old age, and take a share in the

management of their business or household; when, behold, they give her away to a man who is a stranger to them, and never did anything to earn the boon. Nay, they give her with outlay and trouble, joy and feasting, as if they counted it a happy thing to be quit of her. What is more, with their child they likewise give him their hearts, and conceive for him an affection often as strong as for their own bodily offspring. The daughter, likewise, now forsakes her father's house, and all the enjoyments to which she was there accustomed, and resigns herself to the conjugal service of a man, who, but a short time before, was wholly unknown to her. Verily, there is here a higher hand, which knows how to incline hearts, and knit them together, above all human thought and expectation, but in His own wise and wondrous way.

My God, we men have often our hands so full, that we forget that the supreme government of all things belong to Thee. And Thou, on Thy part, often conductest Thy government so quietly, or permittest events to take so strange a course, that the last thing we would suspect, is the presence of Thy hand in the game. A closer inspection, however, soon shows us that Thou controllest and

into order the vast confusion of the world, and, even in silence, marvelously displayest Thy gracious crown. He, therefore, is a fool who wills anything but what Thou wilt.

CLXXVI.

THE FLATTERER.

JUNE 24.

It was mentioned of a lady, that she was, in a high degree, generous and compassionate to the poor, but that she had a neighbour who, by extolling her charities, and all she did, and flattering her both to her face and behind her back, contrived to engross the chief share of her favour and bounty. *Gotthold* thereupon remarked: This flatterer and fawning hypocrite annihilates all the good lady's generous deeds, for by blowing the trumpet before her when she does her alms, and exciting her self-complacency, he places her in the rank of those of whom the Saviour says: *They have their reward.* (Matt. vi. 2.) It is not for the good she does to the poor that he

applauds her, but because his applause increases her liberality towards himself. In this way he acts like him who is the prince of the wicked. When he cannot hinder their charities, the devil becomes the flatterer of the good, holds up to them a mirror in which they may contemplate their goodness in all its magnitude, thereby excites them to self-complacency, makes them idols to themselves, and so imperceptibly plunges them into the lowest abyss. *Wherefore, when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth* (Matt. vi. 3); that is, not only conceal it from others, but try not to know, or instantly to forget it thyself, that thou mayest not fall into pride or self-conceit, which are worse than other sins, because they make even virtue sinful. Let it content thee to have relieved thy neighbour and pleased thy God. He will write the deed in His book of memorial, and, though wholly forgotten by thyself, it will continue in record there.

CLXXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN WITHOUT A CROSS.

JUNE 25.

A LADY of rank and great piety complained that, whereas in Scripture the cross is everywhere spoken of as useful and necessary for the children of God, yet she, for her part, must acknowledge, that hitherto the Lord had never deemed her worthy of one, and that this often raised within her melancholy thoughts and doubts whether she was one of His children or not. *Gotthold* said to her : I confess that complaints like yours are not common, inasmuch as few Christians have any ground to lament a lack of the cross, while others, whose share of it is exceedingly small, nevertheless imagine that it is quite as large as they are able to bear ; and in particular, those who are yet unaccustomed to it, are prone to fancy that their cross is too great and heavy for them. As for your case, however, it seems to me that you are actually bearing a cross without being conscious of it. You

are vexed with gloomy thoughts because you have no cross. These gloomy thoughts, however, appear to me to be themselves a considerable cross, and also a very salutary one, for they not only evince, but nourish and augment your desire to resemble the Lord Jesus, and to take up your cross and follow Him. Besides, the words of our Saviour, "*Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple,*" relate not merely to the common hardships of human life, but are also and especially to be understood of the crucifixion of the old man, of his sinful lusts and desires, of self-denial and the subjugation of the will. For the rest, we cannot and ought not to make crosses for ourselves, for this would end in hypocrisy. *The Lord holds the cup of affliction in His own hand, and pours out of it when and as much as He will.* That He has spared you hitherto, acknowledge with humble gratitude; He is the searcher of hearts, and perhaps knew that, with the cross, your heart would not have felt towards Him as it has done without it. Recollect, however, that the drama of your life has not yet been played to the end, and that for aught you know, your gracious God may still have some little cross in reserve for you, to be imposed in due time.

fiercest tempests often come in the evening of the finest summer days, and it is after the pure wine has been run off, that the lees are wont to follow. It ought to be another ground for gratitude to God, that He has given you time to prepare for all emergencies, and provide yourself with the armour necessary for your defence.

Finally, you live in the midst of Christians who are distressed with poverty and affliction, and groaning under crosses of all kinds ; and, being a member of the body of the Lord Jesus, you will sympathize with them, your fellow members, and take their sufferings and privations to heart. When you see any mourner, mourn with him and cheer him. To him who falls and is ready to sink beneath the weight of his cross, stretch out a friendly hand, and help him to rise. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, let your superfluities be the source from which the wants of pious Christian brethren are supplied. In this manner make yourself a partaker of the afflictions of others, and render to them the service which Simon of Cyrene did to our Lord Jesus, by helping them to bear their cross. By enlisting into their company, you will be sure to pass as one of the genuine cross-bearers.

Lord Jesus, give me the mind of Thine apostle, who knew both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer want. (Phil. iv. 12.) If Thou spare me, I will thank and fervently love Thee, and if Thou layest a cross upon me, I will still thank and love Thee no less. What know I what is good for me? But Thou knowest it, for Thou knowest all things.

CLXXVIII.

THE MIRROR.

JUNE 26.

BEING ushered into an elegant saloon, where, amongst the other furniture, there was a large and bright mirror in which he could see his figure reflected, *Gotthold* mused as follows: Without the aid of a mirror, or similar reflector, no one can perceive his own face. In like manner, no one, be he in other respects ever so intelligent, possesses sufficient acuteness in himself to see his inner man, or in other words, the state of his heart and soul. Any other

person, truly honest and sincere, may act the part of a looking-glass, and show to him his character much more distinctly than he could of himself see it. This has no doubt been ordered by God, in His infinite wisdom, that man might not become his own idol, and reckon others mere mushrooms or shadows. As an apple in the hand of a child makes other children run after, and consort with him, and share his sports, so does He convert affliction, and the need we have of each other's aid, into a girdle of love, with which to bind us all together; just as no one country produces all commodities, in order that the nations, by mutual traffic and commerce, may cultivate concord and friendship. How foolish they are who imagine that all the world stands in need of them, but they of nobody; that they know and understand all things, but others nothing; and that the wit of all mankind should be apprenticed to their wisdom!

My God, keep me from falling into such foolish pride; give me always a prudent, godly, and candid friend, who, like a faithful mirror, may show to me what is for my good. In the want of such a friend, however, do Thou hold up to my view the mirror of Thy Word, irradiated by the beams and grace of

Thy Spirit, that I may never err in choosing what may promote my salvation.

CLXXIX.

THE RAVEN.

JUNE 27.

GOTTHOLD saw a raven flying towards him, and lighting at a little distance upon a withered branch, where it immediately caused its hoarse voice to be heard. Happening, at the time, to be in a desponding mood, and looking forward, with some degree of apprehension, to the future, he took encouragement from the occurrence, and said: Now will I call to mind the words of my Saviour: Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls! (Luke xii. 24.) I likewise call to mind the sayings of Job and of David, in which they teach, that God provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto Him, and wander for lack of

meat (Job xxxviii. 41 ; Ps. cxlvii. 9) ; and the history of the prophet Elias, to whom ravens, by the Divine command, brought bread and flesh in the morning and in the evening. (1 Kings xvii. 4-6.) Why do I vex my mind with my own thoughts, and become a burden to myself? God does not leave this black and unseemly bird, which is also His creature and calls upon Him as it best can, to be destitute ; and will He ever forget me, who am His child—me, from whose heart His own spirit, without intermission, calls aloud to Him, Abba, Father ! Never did I take the bread from my own child when he was hungry, and cast it to the hens, or the dogs ; and shall the Heavenly Father take the bread from me to supply the wants of irrational creatures ! Be far from me such a thought !

My God, I am ashamed that this sable school-master, though destitute of reason, requires to teach me the lesson of confidence in Thy goodness, especially after having experienced, in the course of my life, so many proofs of Thy Fatherly care, assuring me that Thy favour has not been withdrawn nor Thy hand shortened. Why then art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise

Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (Ps. xlii. 12.)

CLXXX.

THE BIRD OF PREY.

JUNE 28.

A FRIEND mentioned to *Gotthold* that he had seen a kite hovering in the air, and marking its quarry, and inquired of him, whether so rapacious a bird could furnish him with a theme for edifying thought. To this *Gotthold* replied: Why not? Such a bird delights in the free air, and soars aloft, as if it would fain approach to heaven; all the while, however, it keeps its sharp eye continually directed to the earth, if haply it may there spy and seize a prey. And like it are hypocrites; they love to speak of heavenly and spiritual things, they go to church and take the holy supper; they read, and pray, and sing; but, nevertheless, their heart retains its earthly inclination, and they seek that which is temporal, more than that which is eternal.

CLXXXI.

THE BIRD OF PREY (2D MED.).

JUNE 29.

You are also aware, continued *Gotthold*, that this bird is wont especially to seize and carry off young chickens. If, then, our Saviour compares Himself with the mother (Matt. xxiii. 37), we are the brood and the Devil is the infernal bird of prey, always upon the watch for us, and missing no opportunity of effecting our ruin. If you wish to be safe from his attacks, trust in Jesus, and in every danger seek your help from Him. In that case, He will not fail to stretch over you the wings of His grace and protection.

CLXXXII.

THE BIRD OF PREY (3D MED.).

JUNE 30.

AFTER a pause *Gotthold* added : This bird has another remarkable peculiarity. During the heats of summer, when the rest of the feathered tribe betake themselves to the shade for coolness, it mounts above the clouds, and there, continues hovering and fluttering till the evening, in order to cool and refresh the heat of its blood. In this, let it be a pattern to us all. When the fire of tribulation rages (1 Pet. iv. 12); and when inward or outward cares exhaust our strength, let us direct our thoughts to heaven, and in spirit and faith soar with our heart to God. This is the best of all refreshments for the weary soul.

THE END.

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